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*SADDLE IN THE SKY*





# SADDLE IN THE SKY

*T H E   L O N E   S T A R   S T A T E*



by J. H. Plenn

ILLUSTRATED BY AGNES LILIENBERG MUENCH

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### THE OLD CHISHOLM TRAIL

*Goin' back to town to draw my money,  
Goin' back home to see my honey,  
With my seat in the saddle,  
And my saddle in the sky,  
I'll quite punchin' cows in the sweet bye-and-bye  
Coma ti yi youpy, youpy ya, youpy ya,  
Coma ti yi youpy, youpy ya.*



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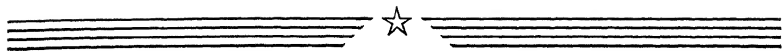
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*B O O K   O N E*







## I

### CHARRO FIESTA

IT HAD been snowing when I left New York. Now I was in Brownsville, as far south as I could get and still be in Texas. The windows were open wide, and the air seemed fragrant and spongy, like that of a dew-weighted spring morning. But it was still winter according to the calendar. The month was February.

I had with me two suitcases full of notes, an accumulation from years of newspaper work in Texas—my own experiences, observations, stories told me by others. This material was to guide me in seeing Texas again—in recapturing some of the feeling of a state which is as big as an empire.

Brownsville's Charro Days Fiesta was about to open, celebrating the lore and tradition of the *charro*, glamorous Mexican rancher-cowboy. The Fiesta would help to revive memories of earlier days, when I was stationed as a news correspondent in the border town of Granderio.

I could now hear music of guitars and violins and soft voices, directly below my window—the sweet melody of *Las Mañanitas*, traditional serenade of Old Mexico. This music at daybreak was like a faraway echo from a Mexican village:

*Que bonitas mañanitas  
Como que quiere llover,  
Parecen las mañanitas  
En que te empece a querer.*

*Despierta, mi bien, despierta,  
Mira que y 'amanecio.  
Ya los pajarillos cantan,  
La luna ya se metio.*

Simple words, deep words, as unadorned and as ornate, as empty and as full of meaning as "I love you."

"What beautiful little mornings," the song says. Not just one morning, but many little mornings, many sighs, many moments, many little tinkles of laughter.

"What beautiful, what lovely little mornings," it says, "as if they wanted to rain, like the little mornings when I first began to love you.

"Awake, my love, awake, behold the dawn has come; the birds are singing, and the moon has gone away."

Snatches of Mexican tunes kept running through my head as I bathed and dressed. I recalled the splashing music of the waterfall in the river near the Mexican village of Tlatenango. I saw myself again, gliding through the cool stream, swimming with Indian peasant families, everybody nude and unashamed, the hot afternoon sun beating down from a clear cobalt sky. As I rubbed myself with the towel, I thought how much more pleasant it was to dry out in the sun on a warm flat rock.

When I reached the street, the sun was coming up over a fringe of tall palm trees. The sun's rays struck almost horizontally against the emerging silhouette of the big steel bridge that spans the Rio Grande. They made long slender highlights along the edges of the curved upper beams.

Again I heard music, from the direction of the river—*Las Mañanitas de Jalisco*:

*El dia en que tu naciste,  
Nacieron todas las flores.  
El dia en que tu naciste,*

*Cantaron los risueños.  
Ya viene amaneciendo,  
Ya la luz del día nos vio.  
Ya despierta, amiga mía,  
Mira que ya amanecio.  
Por la luna doy un peso,  
Por el sol doy un toston.  
Por mi amiga Marianita,  
La vida y el corazon.  
De las estrellas del cielo,  
Quisiera bajarte dos,  
Una para saludarte,  
Otra pa' decirte adios.*

"The day you were born," the song says, "the flowers were born; the day you were born, the nightingale sang. The dawn is here, the light of day has spied us; awake, awake, my friend, behold the dawn is here.

"For the moon I'd give a peso, and for the sun just half, but for my friend, little Mariana, I'd give my life and heart. I'd like to reach up and get two of all the stars in the sky. One I'd want just for to greet you, and the other for to say good-by."

The song ended as I neared a group of five brilliantly clad musicians. Three had guitars, two violins. All were dressed in *charro* costume, with peaked sombrero, a dazzling multi-colored *sarape* draped over one shoulder. The leader walked swiftly toward me. He was a man of medium height, fat, round-faced, his skin brown and shining. His hair was gray, and so was his flowing mustache.

"Señor Colorado!" he exclaimed in the familiar Mexican greeting to a redhead. I had not heard it in a long time, and I must have looked pleasantly surprised. The musician saw that I had not recognized him and he seemed put out by my dullness.

"So you not remember me, señor?" he asked. "Do you

forget the man who got you out of jail in Granderio during the revolution?"

"Chucho!" I shouted. "Mister Pineapple!"

"The very same, and as always, your very humble servant, Jesus Angel Piña."

Chucho is a nickname, familiar form of Jesus. The latter is a fairly common name among Mexicans, but rarely used except on formal occasions.

He embraced me in the Mexican fashion, a warm, human greeting, about which I had almost forgotten. I think I was a bit embarrassed for a moment. Then my arms went around him. I felt his hand patting my shoulder blade, and I found the palms of my hands gently beating his back. We were both talking at once.

"How have you been?"

"You have changed!"

"Good to see you!"

"What are you doing?"

"I am a troubador, as you see. And you? Still writing lies?"

"Big lies, Don Chucho, not just little ones for the newspapers. Now it is to be a whole book full of lies."

Mr. Pineapple called to his fellow musicians.

"*Muchachos!* Come here, I want you to meet a good gringo, the very best, an old, old friend of mine."

I met Jose and Emilio and Pablo and Federico.

"We must be moving along," Mr. Pineapple said. "We have a schedule to make. The Fiesta committee hired us to make the rounds. You will be at the dance tonight, no? We are to play there. If you are not too busy, maybe we can drink *tequila* together, no? Like old times in the days of *Las Dos Naciones*."

"Nothing I'd like better, Don Chucho. And what became of The Two Nations?"

"Yes, I know, you *diablo*, you still remember the little private showcase where I kept the French drawings, eh?"

Jose interrupted.

"*Andale, vamos, hombre,*" he said, "it is getting late. Excuse me, señor, if I seem in a hurry, but we must go."

"Till tonight then, Chucho, *hasta luego.*"

"*Hasta luego, amigo.*"

The musicians turned the corner, and I walked up the street toward the Rio Grande.

Meeting Mr. Pineapple again was like opening a window to let a fresh breeze into a room. As I walked along, absorbing the sights and sounds around me, I was vaguely conscious of going back through the years, groping through layers of long-dormant impressions.

But the things of the present were now too interesting to take second place. The memories faded as the town came to life rapidly with the rising sun. I had dropped into the middle of a gay pageant.

The day before, when I had arrived, people were dressed like those in any Texas town in the usual variety of clothes, everyday suits and dresses and work clothes. Aside from the circumstance that all the men had grown beards, mustaches, and long sideburns, there was nothing to indicate the three-day jubilant revolution to follow.

Now, in the bright morning, everybody was in Mexican costume. Broad-brimmed sombreros and braided jackets, flowing ties, and skin-tight leather pants with silver spangles—the *charros*. And the women, as *chinas poblanas*, companions of the charros, in bright shirtwaists and gleaming, flared, swishing skirts, ribbons in their hair, filigree earbobs dangling.

A gay caballero was driving a laundry truck. A ragged peon, unshaven, crowned with a tattered straw sombrero and wearing coarse *huarache* sandals, sat in a swivel chair behind

a shiny desk in the bank. Automobiles had vanished. In their place, burros and horses appeared, many with dashing *charros* astride them.

The barriers were down. The Mexican was king for a day—this man of the smaller nation, the poor neighbor of Uncle Sam. His songs were being sung, his music played, his language, his drinks, his foods sought—*mezcal, tequila, enchiladas, tamales, frijoles*. All something like the Mardi Gras, but deeper and richer, spontaneous and unified, without the elaborate mummery, but with all the freedom of movement.

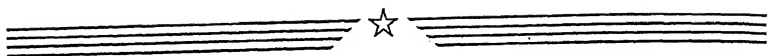
Maybe that man is not really a peon. Perhaps he is a doctor or a newspaper editor, maybe the man who cuts the lawn or sweeps the street. Deep down beneath the festive spirit, I sensed something religious, too, something like the ceremony of washing the beggars' feet. Even more evident was the farewell to drabness, if only for a day or two. Escape from gray clothes and gray conversation, gray ideas and gray prejudices that set up barriers between people because their skin is a different color, because they pray to other gods, or because they pray to the same god in another manner, or in another language.

As I neared the river, I thought about Charro Days and what such a festival might mean spiritually to the Mexican resident of the border region. It seemed to me that he would find pride and exultation, that he might be thrilled to learn that his songs and the things close to him can bring so much pleasure and joy to others. I envied the Mexican's capacity to produce beautiful things, which somehow last longer, touch us deeper, mean more, than much of the tinsel that goes with our stridently manufactured entertainment. A gray world seemed to vanish like an ugly fog with the first few bars of a Mexican song.

The river was low, the water about twenty feet down from the bank. Its slow muddy current was accelerated as it ap-

proached the bend, swirled and eddied in numerous whirlpools, then rushed swiftly under the big steel bridge now gleaming in the brilliant sunshine.

With eyes fixed on the movement of the brownish waters, I found myself drifting away from Charro Days. Of all I had seen and heard during the morning, only Mr. Pineapple remained. Gradually now, under the warm sun, the picture of my first meeting with him began to form. I was back in Granderio, back to 1916.



## II

### CURIOS

I REACHED Granderio in 1916.

From the doorway of the only store open that August afternoon, a rotund, moonfaced, cinnamon-colored Mexican, dressed in a white linen suit, greeted me.

"Meet Mr. Pineapple, Jesus Angel Pineapple, your humble servant."

He stretched out a soft hand, not fat, but a muscular hand, well padded with solid flesh.

Mr. Pineapple looked very solemn as he spoke. Then a burbling musical chuckle broke his round face wide open. Little hollows and wrinkles spread in concentric circles around his mouth. I thought of a stone thrown into a still pond.

"You are a stranger, I know," he said. "And how do I know? Even if I did not know everybody in town I could tell you were new here. Only visitors would be out in the street at this hour. This is siesta time."

"You yourself look very wide awake," I answered.

"Ah! You are quick, amigo!" he retorted. "But come now, do not be offended because I stopped you. I want to make you feel at home. Mr. Pineapple has no enemies—only good customers and good friends. I am here early to unpack some new merchandise. Tomorrow is payday at the army post. Also many more soldiers are coming today, so I must be prepared."

I was impressed by the sensitivity of a man who could find such subtleties in my innocent and casual remark.

After a few moments, I heard a distant rumble. I walked to the curb and looked down the deserted street. I saw the heat waves rising from the wood paving blocks, like a translucent film of oil blown upward by the wind. The gummy brownish-black tar in the seams had melted and was spreading. It reminded me of spilled ink, oozing in widening blots.

Mr. Pineapple joined me at the curb.

"That could be the soldiers now, but it will be some time before they get here," he said. "Come in out of the sun and we shall talk a while."

I turned around toward his curio store. The brick front was painted solid blue. There were no windows. Only a wide, high doorway cut the façade. On each side of it, shallow rectangular show cases had been hung. They contained hundreds of small articles, jewelry, knick-knacks. Over the doorway the name of the store was printed in English and Spanish:

## THE TWO NATIONS

ANGEL PIÑA, PROP.

LAS DOS NACIONES

This was my first introduction to the wonderland of The Two Nations, and to the inimitable Mr. Pineapple. For the next hour or so, while he unpacked his new merchandise, we talked—about him, about me, about Granderio, and the border. During my stay in Granderio, I was to visit him often, spend many hours in The Two Nations. After I knew Mr. Pineapple better, I came to understand his store as a projection of some kind of kaleidoscope inside his head, a fabulous kaleidoscope, clearing house for centuries of stories and legends.

Angel Pineapple was, it could be said, the incarnation of popular lore of the border and Mexico. But he was much more than an encyclopedia, a mere accumulation of history and fable. He himself kept adding material, weaving new combinations, spinning the colored chips of glass into new patterns. His contributions were as rich as anything he absorbed from the outside. When he got going good, he was Gulliver, Major Hoople, Gargantua, Dick Tracy, Paul Bunyan, Ulysses, Robin Hood, The Lone Ranger and Uncle Remus all rolled into one.

Mr. Pineapple's favorite pastime, besides lifting a jigger of *mezcal* to his lips or picking a tune on his guitar, was to make literal translations from English to Spanish and vice versa. He performed some verbal wonders, working on names, proverbs, idiomatic expressions, poetry and songs.

As his name, Piña, literally became Pineapple, so one of his friends, Casimiro Guerra, just as literally was transformed into I-Almost-See-War. The waiter in the *Mexico Bello Cafe* next door, Fructuoso Salinas, was gleefully hailed as Fruitful Salts. Dolores de Leon, the frail clerk in the dress shop, grew formidable as Pains-of-the-Lion. Mr. Pineapple's fertile imagination yielded translations and anecdotes that flowed with greatest ease when the *mezcal* or *tequila* was being poured.

He might get started with the label on the bottle, an ornate bit of printing telling the world that the contents had been distilled by one Jose Cuervo. Mr. Pineapple familiarly called him Joe Crow.

*There were two crows sat on a tree,  
Sing Billy Magee Magaw.  
And they were black as black could be,  
Oh, Karreeeeee, Karrou, Karrawaw!*

After giving the translation of Jose Cuervo, he might go on with the Cuervo legend.

"We have come to believe," he told me, "that Jose Cuervo was really not a Mexican at all. . . ."

There were, you see, two brothers, Joe Crow and Jim Crow, in Texas many years ago. They were slaves on the plantation of a very cruel master. Jim Crow bore the hardships without complaining, but Joe was rebellious. One dark night he got on a horse and away to Mexico he was off. . . .

And with the next drink, Mr. Pineapple himself was off, on an absorbing all-night journey into the land of folklore and fabrication, legend, fact and fancy, freely garnished with translations and retranslations.

Mr. Pineapple, for me, became a splendid news source. He knew everything that was going on and had hundreds of friends for miles around, among both Mexicans and Americans. He was more American than the Americans, it used to be said, and more Mexican than the Mexicans. He knew all there was to be known about South Texas and northern Mexico, both past and present and, I sometimes thought, their future as well.

I rarely found Mr. Pineapple alone in his store. Usually there were three or four soldiers, looking around, examining the thousand and one different articles in a variety of showcases and on display tables. Or they might be addressing postcards on the writing shelf. Over the shelf Mr. Pineapple had placed numerous quotations, as well as translations from Spanish verses, which would fit nicely into a letter or card. A large frame enclosed the longest quotation. Originally it had been written as prose, but Mr. Pineapple had arranged it in verse form:

*Man, if you have an old mother, be good to her.  
Don't wait to put your affection on a tombstone.  
Don't wait to throw all your bouquets on her grave.  
Your mother's life has not been easy.*

*Your father was a poor man, and from the day  
she married him, she stood by his side  
fighting the wolf from the door with her naked  
hands.*

*She cooked, cleaned, scrubbed, patched, nursed.  
She did without the dress she needed  
that you might not be shamed  
by your clothes before the other boys.*

*Remember, while there is yet time,  
while she is living, to pay back to her  
in love and tenderness  
some of the debt you owe.*

*You are away from her, but the least you can do is to  
Write Home Today!*

Near the writing shelf was a big display of scenic views, funny cards, some with verses, others with drawings, still others with both. A favorite was "Moonlight on the Rio Grande," with clouds and moon, the light retouched in a silvery streak across the river. There were views of the Alamo, of palm trees in endless rows, Longhorn steers on the range, Longhorns in close-up, the Courthouse, the Federal Building, the Army Post, the red granite State Capitol at Austin, a scene of cotton pickers in Texas, a Texas oil gusher, the Spanish missions in San Antonio, army aviation scenes at Kelly Field, men and women in Mexican costumes, bullfight views, shots of cockfights, plain and tinted, photographs of horned toads, rattlesnakes, cactus plants, burros, goats, armadillos, mustangs, coyotes.

The "funny" cards had these slogans, among others: "If I had you in my arms," and "Gee, you're some good kissing!" One showed a man planting a chaste kiss on a woman's cheek. On the card was this printed threat: "This will happen to you in Granderio."

Sentimental cards had a minor place in the display. These were embossed with flowers and golden hearts, cupids and

arrows, some with figures woven in brightly colored bird-feathers.

Only after repeated visits did I come to appreciate fully the infinite variety of The Two Nations. I might pick up an armadillo basket, made from the animal's scaly armor, lacquered, the tail bent over into the mouth to form a handle, the inside of the basket lined with pink and blue satin. Before I knew it, I was immersed in a display of stuffed horned toads, some dancing a minuet, some squared off in a miniature boxing ring, some mounted in natural all-fours poses on varnished panels. On the same counter were stuffed coiled rattlesnakes; belts, pouches and billfolds made of snakeskin, rabbits' feet, horseshoes edged with felt, elks' teeth made into watchfobs.

Another facet of Mr. Pineapple's character was revealed to me one army payday when I was in The Two Nations listening to a new batch of stories. A soldier walked in and, without looking at any of the stock, reached into his pocket and pulled out a five-dollar bill.

"I'm sure much obliged to you, Don Chucho," he said, handing the bill to Mr. Pineapple. "That sure helped to tide me over."

"Do not speak of it, Jim, it was nothing. And how is your pretty wife? Is she still visiting, or has she gone back home?"

"The ball-and-chain is still here," Jim said. "But she's going away tomorrow. I'd like to get some stuff for her to take back to our place in Minnesota, if you'll let me have it on jawbone."

"The Two Nations is yours, my friend; just take anything you like. You pay . . . when you pay, and never worry about it."

I learned that Mr. Pineapple regularly lent money to the soldiers, without interest. Only one ever failed to pay the loan back. Some of the boys used to bank with the proprietor

of The Two Nations. They would leave their pay with him, and draw on it during the month.

The soldier spent about an hour picking out what he wanted. He had laid out on the counter:

Bronzed pot-metal replicas of the Alamo made into book-ends; the Statue of Liberty, the Capitol at Washington; rings, necklaces, earbobs, bracelets, of hammered silver; a decorated gourd; a Mexican pottery waterjug; some plates and trays; a silk pillow cover, decorated with the Mexican and U. S. flags crossed in friendly fashion, another with an American eagle wearing an Uncle Sam striped hat; some arrowheads and spearheads; polished oyster shells converted into ashtrays, with "Souvenir of the Lone Star State" printed in gold paint; a miniature gold revolver and anchor; a two-and-a-half-dollar goldpiece, mounted as a medallion, with the engraved legend, "You'll never be broke as long as you have me."

With the help of Mr. Pineapple, I rummaged through the section labeled "Fun Goods." There were itching powder and sneezing powder; loaded cigars and cigarettes; trick matches that showered flame; rubber cigars; squirt-flowers for the lapel; miniature toilet bowls and chamberpots; toilet paper with cute verses; miniature silk panties that folded up like a handkerchief; moocher cigarette packs, with buzzers inside; silhouette hootchy-kootchy dancers that moved when the card was pressed; imitation snakes, tarantulas, and scorpions; a book of sexy drawings with verses, suggesting that you might as well have a good time while you can. One of the verses said:

*Did you ever think when the hearse goes by,  
That some day you and I must die?  
We'll take a ride in the big plumed hack,  
Out to the cemetery and never come back.  
I don't care how much you hustle for gold,*

*No dead man's hand a dollar can hold;  
You can strive and thrive, pinch and save,  
But the dollar goes to hell when you hit the grave.*

One day in 1917, after the United States had entered the war, Mr. Pineapple unpacked a new shipment of cards. Some were reproductions of war posters—the boot of the Hun crushing a little child, the Crown Prince's face on the body of a rat. One was entitled, "A Bat Out o' Hell." On this, taking off from a sticky mire labeled "Kultur," was a bat, its feet and wings drippy with the gummy stuff. The bat's head was that of the Kaiser, with huge ears, spiked helmet; teeth bared villainously under the well-known mustache. Sections of the wing were labeled Plunder, Rapine, Arson, Murder, Lies.

Poems and song cards completed the new collection. Some had verses from the *Rubaiyat*. The boys liked these, Mr. Pineapple said, to help break down a girl's sales resistance. There were the he-man poems, "Casey at the Bat," "Death of Jesse James," "Shooting of Dan McGrew," "Scarface Lou," Kipling's "The Ladies."



# III

## GRANDERIO

GRANDERIO in 1916, before the soldiers came down by the thousands, was a sleepy town, more Mexican than American. In the afternoon, the streets were deserted, all the business houses closed. Along about five o'clock, the siesta over, Granderio shook itself awake and people began to emerge from the houses.

The second half of the day did not really begin, however, until the meeting of the Sit-and-Spit Club was in session. After the War, townfolk changed the name of the Club to something considered more dignified but which they regarded as appropriate—the League of Nations. Mr. Pineapple was, of course, a charter member of the League of Nations, and through his influence I was frequently permitted to sit in on the daily sessions.

The League gathered in the shade in front of The Two Nations. Each delegate brought his own chair, from office or store, and when the session opened the men were seated in a semi-circle at the curb. Sometimes there were four or five. On other days, there might be so many that the semi-circle stretched to a full circle, looping out into the street.

The Judge was the first member of the League I met. He came to the door of The Two Nations, dragging his chair behind him. A corn cob pipe was stuck in his mouth. Behind his octagon glasses his eyes looked squinted. He was

dressed neatly in blue serge coat, white trousers, a flat straw hat, a tight knot in his necktie. His face was deeply lined, as if he had permitted all the muscles to develop freely and even might have trained them. I learned later that before he had come to Granderio, the Judge had been an actor, in an old-time minstrel show, then in vaudeville and on the legitimate stage. His training made him one of the best trial lawyers of the region. It was said he could make a jury eat out of his hand. Like Mr. Pineapple in this respect, the Judge had the knack of converting current stories and happenings into his store of fable and legend, so that the latter were always up to date. Old jokes were made over for contemporary settings. He created characters to fit his stories, and he invented or adapted stories to fit his characters.

"*Buenas tardes*, Don Chucho, how is your dime museum getting on?"

"Fine, Judge, and how is your stock of old almonds and chestnuts? Do you happen to have a nice old story to tell my young friend here? He hasn't had time to hear your jokes yet, and won't know the difference."

"Well, Don Chucho, you can't accuse me of ever telling the same story twice, can you? I heard a good one at the election rally last night. Jack Beaner, who's running for sheriff, told it on the illustrious citizen who is now in office.

"It seems that there was once a king who used to like to hunt. He depended on his astrologers for advice about the weather. One day they told him that the weather would be excellent. But the very same day heavy clouds blew up after the king and his men were out in the forest. There they met an old hunter, astride a jackass. The king summoned him and asked:

"'What do you think of the weather, you an outdoors man? My astrologers say it will be fine, but it looks bad to me.'

“‘A storm is coming up very soon,’ the hunter said. ‘If you ride as swiftly as your horse can carry you, you will reach your palace about the time the storm breaks.’

“So the king raced back, and it happened exactly as the hunter had said. Next day the king sent for the man and offered him the office of soothsayer. But the hunter said he did not deserve it, since he relied on his donkey for the weather and it was the donkey that grew restless when a storm was brewing.

“‘Then,’ the king said, ‘the donkey shall have the office.’

“And ever since that time, it has been possible for a jackass to hold public office.”

It was from the Judge, too, that I first heard a rational explanation of why the Legislature was making the mockingbird the official state bird and the pecan nut the official state tree.

“First of all,” he said, “consider the color of the bird, a combination of brown and white. It likes people and always builds its nest near a house. It will come in and visit if the occupants of the house are good neighbors. Many of its traits, you will find, are traits which we may regard as Texan.

“Its young are hard to tame, and they try to stand on their own feet before they can. The mocker is a courageous bird, and has been known to attack bigger birds, and even cats or human beings when the fledglings are in danger. Of course we know that the mockingbird is an exquisite singer, but what is even more interesting is its talent as a mimic, its power to imitate almost any sound—even a piano or a phonograph, or the weird noises of the street—to bark and wail and whistle and to reproduce the calls of other birds. It is a clown, a magnificent clown, bigger and better than the original bird it imitates.

“The mocker is Texas all over, much as you might say the pecan tree is all over a big part of Texas. The pecan tree

is sturdy, grows big, provides a great amount of shade and an abundance of nourishment. The pecan is a tree that will respond readily to good treatment, and what is more significant, it will take a great deal of abuse and in spite of that abuse will make headway. Hard to discourage, just like Texas and the Texans."

Other members of the Sit-and-Spit Club League of Nations whom I best remember were Don Conrado, a Spaniard, in the commission business; the Admiral, a retired sea captain; Frenchy, a musician; and Uncle Karl, a retired German cattleman. All had lived along the border a quarter of a century or more, and most of their families had been in Texas at least a hundred years.

Buried treasure and pirates were hobbies of the Admiral. Too old to do any more treasure hunting, he was writing a book about vanished loot and chests of gold and phantom ships, sailed by buccaneers who had roved the Spanish Main.

Frenchy's people had left New Orleans when the Union Army occupied it during the Civil War. Some of his relatives went to Bagdad, the "phantom city" that sprang up near the mouth of the Rio Grande. Others had scattered along the border and in Mexico.

From Frenchy I heard the story of the first ice made in Texas, in San Antonio, back in 1866, by a Frenchman.

The Judge was reminded of a story about the days back in Mobile before ice was widely known. It happened during a trial in Federal court.

"A backwoodsman named Zeke was on the jury," the Judge related. "During a recess he watched the Negro porter bring in a block of ice to put in the water cooler.

"Where did that ice come from?" Zeke asked the porter.

"I got it in the ice factory," the porter answered.

"Well, sir, you should have seen Zeke get riled up. He shouted that he knew ice was cut from frozen lakes and wasn't

going to let no ignorant fool nigger run no monkey jimcracks over him. Finally they had to take Zeke to the factory to see for himself.

"When Zeke got back home, he told his neighbors about the wonderful place where they made ice. They thought he'd lost his mind when he described a factory where a lot of niggers feed logs under a boiler for a big fire and a lot of other niggers pull out big blocks of ice.

"First the townfolk made signs to indicate they thought Zeke had bats in his belfry. Then some challenged him openly, hinting he was a big 'larr.' It wound up in a bet, with the town divided, taking sides. Half the village went to Mobile with Zeke to settle the bet. They visited the factory, watched the miracle, heard the explanation that 'you boil it till it gets hot and then you fan it till it gets cold and you've got ice.' When they returned and reported, Zeke not only won the bet, but he was big guns. From then on, he could tell any story, no matter how fantastic, and not a soul would doubt it, no more than you can doubt any story I might tell you."

"Propaganda, propaganda, and more propaganda."

A newcomer at The Two Nations door was speaking, commenting, not on the Judge's story, but on some of the war-poster reproductions in a showcase. The newcomer was Uncle Karl, the German member of the League of Nations. His face was covered with auburn mustache and whiskers. His beard reached to the top of his vest. Spots of gray were visible in the maze of hair. His long brown-green coat and trousers hung on him like burlap sacks.

Uncle Karl was a philosopher, with a world-outlook almost the direct opposite of his forebears' who were 1848 exiles from Germany. They had settled one of the first European colonies in Texas, in the Hill Country around San Antonio.

The retired cattleman liked to reminisce about the early-day desperadoes along the border. He had known Ben Thompson personally. Ben acquired a reputation as a tough hombre after serving in the Civil War. When the Confederates were defeated, Ben went to Mexico to join Maximilian's forces. One night in a Matamoros saloon, a Yankee officer, stationed in Brownsville, was offering a toast to Abe Lincoln. There was only one answer for a Confederate. Ben returned with a toast for Jeff Davis. The Yank refused to drink, and denounced Davis as a traitor. Ben threw the officer to the floor and cut off one of his ears.

Uncle Karl also recalled some of the excursions of the James Boys and the Youngers on the border. Now and then these desperadoes would ride a trail southward, kill the cowhands, take the herd into Mexico and sell it there. It was after one of these drives that the James and Youngers shot up Matamoros. They were there on the night of the *serenata*, weekly promenade in the plaza. Men walked in one direction, women in the opposite. They made eyes at one another and stopped occasionally to occupy the same bench for a few moments, all very formal. The Texans were informal. They started a fight. Two of the outlaws were stabbed, four Mexicans were killed.

I still have an old newspaper clipping that Uncle Karl gave me. It tells of the tragic end of Jim Younger, who shot himself to death in Minneapolis. The dispatch, dated October 19, 1902, reported that Jim had been on parole, and that he had been working as a tombstone salesman. Since his reform, he had fallen in love, but there was opposition from the lady's family, as well as in the law that forbade legal marriage of a paroled convict. So his career, begun with Quantrell's Guerrillas in the Civil War, ended in a backroom in Minneapolis. On a package of letters the police found an envelope. He had written:

"To all that is good and true I love and bid farewell. Oh, lassie, goodbye. All relatives just stay away from me. No crocodile tears wanted. Reporters, be my friends. Burn me up."

On a separate sheet of paper Jim Younger had scrawled this message:

"Oct. 18—Last night on earth. So, goodbye, lassie, for I still think of thee, A. U. G., forgive me, for this is my only chance. I have done nothing wrong. But politics is all that Van Sart, Wolfe and others of this stripe care for. Let the people judge. Treat me right and fair, reporters, for I am a square man. A socialist, and decidedly in favor of woman's rights. Bryan is the brightest man these U. S. has ever produced. His one mistake was in not coming out for all the people and absolute socialism. There is no such thing as a personal God. God is universal and I knew him well and am not afraid."

The influx of soldiers turned Granderio into something of an adjunct to the army post. Population of the garrison was several times that of the town. Young men—regular army soldiers and national guardsmen—were there, from Minnesota, Indiana, Illinois, Ohio, New York, from small towns and cities in the East, the North and the Middle West. Texas was a strange, wild land to them, a movie-and-story-book land, and the Mexican border was the wildest part of it.

*Has anybody here seen Villa?*

*V—I—double—L—A.*

*Has anybody here seen Villa?*

*Has he passed this way?*

*His heart is black and his hands are red,*

*We'll bring him back alive or dead.*

*Has anybody here seen Villa?*

*You heard what we said!*

The bold Villa got away, but the boys in khaki had a lot of fun in the cactus anyhow. For many of the Yanks, the experience was the beginning of a new life, discovery of a big undeveloped hunk of the U. S. A., where there was still plenty of room for a man to build a home, to farm, raise a family, and enjoy life. They made friends on the border, and when they were mustered out hiked back there to make a new start.

To others, the whole border experience was a pain in the neck. They had left fairly comfortable spots in northern cities to find adventure, fighting, romance. For adventure, they got kitchen-police duty; for fighting, they got chiggers in their pants, sand in their ears and eyes, and had to clean their rifles twice a day; for romance, they got lonely sentry vigils in the cactus, or the digging of latrines.

The boys wrote home about it. Their food, some of them said, was goatmilk and goatmeat, coffee and biscuits. For Sunday dessert, the cook made one pie out of dried fruit, and everybody filed by and took a smell of it. Billygoats were kept around the camp for fattening. The billies were so tough no rifle could kill them, the boys said. When meat was needed, the field artillery was called to work over the goats.

Mr. Pineapple showed me a letter written by a lad from New York. The soldier, in a hurry to get to a date on time, had left it with the proprietor of The Two Nations. He had asked Don Chucho to inclose one of the "Hell in Texas" cards and to address and mail the letter. Mr. Pineapple read the letter and decided it was too good to forget. He told me, and I made a copy of it:

"What a country we've come to! Here, instead of having fireworks on the Fourth of July like we have up north, they have them on Christmas and New Year's. And the nights are weird, especially when they put you out alone on sentry duty, out in the middle of nothing. All night long you hear wild howls, coyotes or wolves or wild dogs or something, and

other strange noises in the brush, but you don't see a thing but the clump of cactus where your post is.

"We got orders to shoot anything that comes toward us. You're so jumpy, expecting you don't know what, maybe a rattlesnake to jump at you, or one of those gila monsters or the horned toad that squirts blood from its eyes, you feel like just shooting every five minutes. The other night I heard something along the river bank and I fired. Then I heard another noise, like something heavy dropping on dry branches, and fast footsteps like someone running away. I found a sackful of bottles of a yellowish Mexican liquor they call messcoll. I tasted some in town the other day, and boy, oh boy, if you want something to burn your gut that's the stuff. No wonder those Mexicans are so mean, if they drink much of that. It must have been one of those tamales trying to smuggle the liquor over to this side. We never did find him. I sure was itching to squirt a little tamale poison out of my rifle.

"Something pretty awful happened in town the other day. Our commanding officer was murdered. I don't know what the lowdown is, but they say the man, a civilian, who shot him was awfully jealous. He got the colonel into a car and then he shot both the colonel and his own wife. They say she was a rich girl and the man was a musician, that he gave up his career because of his love for his wife, and now he couldn't stand the thought of his wife two-timing him. Like as if we didn't have enough worries watching the border, we have to be getting mixed up into all kinds of fights of our own. You know there's a lot of friction between the regulars and the national guard boys and the rangers. Each boy thinks it's his personal business. Each bunch thinks it's the only one that really knows the country and what ought to be done and how. I guess it's true about the rangers knowing the country all right, because they've been all over it. The regulars call

the guardsmen wooden soldiers, and the guardsmen and the townfolks are kind of sore about some of the fellows from up north putting on the dog too much.

"We got orders to stay on this side of the river, but the rangers don't pay any attention to such stuff. The other day an American and his bride were killed by bandits. The rangers got up a posse of thirty cowboys and they went on down into Mexico and brought back four Mexicans and strung them up on a tree. Some Negro troops are stationed in a few places and that makes things ticklish, too, seeing how the darkeys come from up north where they're used to different treatment. The general issued an order to them to obey all the Texas laws and customs, too, which means they can't go into the same places where Whites go, except if it's marked Negro. The general was fair about it. He told the natives that the Negroes did not come of their own free will, but were ordered here, and he told the roughnecks, the White Men who might get notions, not to try to show off and cause trouble.

"A whole trainload of refugees from Mexico came over the other day and we had to do guard duty at the station. A lot of the refugees were Mexicans too. I asked some of them if they were Spaniards and they said no that they were Mexicans. They sure don't look anything like the greasers you see along the border. They must have some other blood in them. We had a lot of fun with a bunch of fresh rookies that showed up the other day. You know some of them are just kids. We razed them about having their mothers' apron strings around their waists instead of belts, and about their mamas holding parasols over their heads while they drill, so this hot Texas sun won't get them. There weren't enough cots for them the first night, and boy, did we fill them with stories about tarantulas and spiders and snakes, the same stuff that was handed out to us when we first got here. The kids

were so scared some of them stayed up all night and some of them crawled up on top of the privies to sleep. I guess I'll close for this time. It's hard to tell you what this country is really like. It's different from anything you ever saw up there."

"P. S. I'm inclosing a postcard with a poem on it that one of the soldiers made up about this country. It's called "Hell in Texas," and the fellow who wrote it sure knew his okra. It was 110 in the shade today."

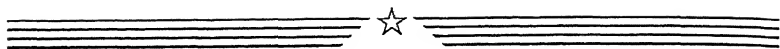
#### HELL IN TEXAS .

*The Devil in Hell, we're told, was chained,  
And a thousand years he there remained.  
He never complained nor did he groan,  
But determined to start a Hell of his own,  
Where he could torment the souls of men,  
Without being chained in a prison pen.  
So he asked the Lord if he had on hand,  
Anything left when he made this land.  
The Lord said, "Yes, I have plenty on hand,  
But I left it down on the Rio Grande.  
The fact is, old boy, the stuff's so poor  
I don't think you can use it in Hell any more."  
But the Devil went down to look at the truck,  
And if he took it as a gift he was stuck.  
But after examining it carefully and well,  
He concluded the place was too dry for a Hell.  
So in order to get it off His hand,  
The Lord promised the Devil to water the land,  
For he had some water, or rather some dregs,  
A regular cathartic and smelled like bad eggs.  
Hence the trade was closed, the deed was given,  
And the Lord went back to His home in Heaven.  
The Devil said to himself, "I have all that is needed  
To make a good Hell," and he sure succeeded.  
He began by putting thorns all over the trees,  
And mixed up the sand with millions of fleas.*

*He scattered tarantulas along all the roads,  
Put thorns on the cactus and horns on the toads.  
He lengthened the horns of the Texas steers,  
And put an addition on the jackrabbits' ears;  
He put a little devil in the broncho steed,  
And poisoned the feet of the centipede.  
The rattlesnake bites you, the scorpion stings.  
The mosquito delights you with his buzzing wings.  
The sand burrs prevail, and so do the ants,  
And those who sit down need half-soles on their  
pants.*

*The Devil then said that throughout the land,  
He'd arranged to keep up the Devil's own brand.  
And all should be mavericks unless they bore  
Marks and scratches of bites and thorns by the score.  
The heat in the summer is a hundred and ten,  
Too hot for the Devil and too hot for men.  
The wild boar roams through the black chaparral,  
It's a Hell of a place he has for a Hell.  
The red pepper grows upon the banks of the brook,  
And the Mexicans use it in all that they cook.  
Just dine with the greaser and then you will shout,  
"I've Hell on the inside as well as the out!"*





# IV

## BACKDROP

THE Charro Days Fiesta brought many old-time residents of the border country to Brownsville, some of whom I had known in Granderio. Old-Timers in Brownsville generally do not find it difficult to work up a violent nostalgia for things as they were thirty years ago or even as recently as twenty years ago. This relatively recent development, drawing upon many of the Middle Western states for new residents, can be observed not only in the Lower Rio Grande Valley, but also at the extreme opposite end of the state—the Panhandle, in Northwest Texas, nearly eight hundred miles away from the lower border.

Fifty years ago the Panhandle was a vast stretch of nearly naked land. Historians there like to look upon its unfolding as the compression of four centuries of history into about fifty years, a high-speed abridgement in which each decade raced through the transformations of nearly half a century. There are men in the Panhandle today who ride elevators, fly planes, tune radios, with an unceasing feeling of wonder and revelation at the pace of a world in which they grew up on saddleback, shooting buffaloes and Indians.

Brownsville's tempo, in spite of the recent development, has been more lento. It may be this slower pace which helps to explain why a town with a humdrum name like Brownsville should be of any particular interest either to a writer or

a reader. Perhaps the answer may be found in what the lumber trade calls "seasoning," what the distillers call "aging." In either case, the product of such a process usually has strength, durability, and mellowness. Some communities have it, and it can be felt at once even if all the store fronts and filling stations and tourist camps look like those elsewhere.

In the shaping of the Texas character, the Rio Grande country, which was an advanced outpost of the Spanish Conquest, has contributed decisively, definitively. Without this influence, Texas might have become a loosely expanded Plantation South or a territorially inflated Missouri, whence Moses Austin, first big-scale promoter of American colonization in Texas, began negotiations for settlement of three hundred families under the protection of the Mexican flag.

The Rio Grande influence has filtered through several of the key border points in Texas—Brownsville, Rio Grande City, Laredo, Eagle Pass, Del Rio, El Paso. The Brownsville area, the lower Rio Grande, reflects the essentials of the historical process, plus other factors—such as proximity to the Gulf Coast—which make it more complete and perhaps more significant.

Not so long ago I ran into a disgruntled settler in the border country who pointed his nose northward and announced he was "going back to the United States." He probably felt something of what Egbert L. Viele wrote back in 1878 in *Frank Leslie's Popular Monthly*. Sagacious Mr. Viele reported:

"The American residents on the Rio Grande are different in many respects from the great body of the Texas population. The rich lands of that large and productive State have drawn to it a highly industrious and superior class of citizens, under whose influence Texas has become the Empire State of the Southwest, and by whose enterprise and industry the splen-

did resources of that State are being developed with wonderful rapidity. But the country between the Nueces and the Rio Grande is entirely different from the rest of the State. . . .

✓ "Law and order are terms not particularly well understood along the Rio Grande. Power and force emanating from the military authorities maintain a certain degree of conservation, but it is a difficult matter for anyone to feel absolutely safe at any time. There is something in the atmosphere that teaches one to feel that the tenor of his life is a very uncertain one, whether he is an American or a Mexican. An open enemy, or a treacherous friend, may confront him at any moment, and for this reason no one allows himself to go unarmed. The rifle, pistol, or the knife, finds murderous employment in the hands of some reckless persons almost any day in the week, and a life insurance company, even with an honest president, would find it difficult to keep afloat in this region.

"Public and private morality are at a large discount. Nevertheless, there are found in every one of the towns along the river men of character and intelligence, merchants of probity, enterprise and excellent commercial standing. In fact, there is here a very good field for the exercise of business talent, and not a few individuals have accumulated a regular competency in the regular course of their legitimate business, while it cannot be denied that illicit traffic has also flourished successfully. Even among those who are apparently the most reckless in regard to their personal conduct, there are men of high-toned, chivalrous natures that would scorn a mean action.

"But it would require a large amount of the leaven of righteousness to leaven the lump of iniquity that is to be found in the heterogeneous mass of humanity here thrown together, and it is sad to say that this leaven of righteousness will never be found in the depraved and degenerate priest-

hood that maintain a semblance of religion and exercise a sort of superstitious control over the mass of native Mexicans. These padres, as they are called, have fallen away from the faith of their fathers, and their isolation for so long a period of time in this remote region has induced an utter disregard for those moral and religious obligations without which they are a curse to any community, either of saints or sinners."

Mr. Viele reckoned without the Homeseekers. The last quarter of a century—with the coming of the railroads, building of highways, airports and deepwater ports—has brought this area culturally and psychologically, as well as physically, into the United States. The process has been violent in varying degrees, taking place during the upheavals in Mexico and during the World War. The movement of thousands of American soldiers to the border stimulated renewed colonization and what is known as civilization.

The twentieth century arrival of the soldiers—a kind of dress rehearsal for our entry into the World War—was not the first military migration to Texas. Earlier military expeditions left their influence—filibustering bands when Texas was still part of Mexico, a century before; fighting forces of the United States army under General Zachary Taylor in the War against Mexico; Union and Confederate troops during the Civil War; Rough Riders in ninety-eight.

They rolled into Texas in waves and then rolled back again, each time leaving a fresh deposit of humanity to become a part of the new country. Some stayed on in the service, others were mustered out on the border and became civilian settlers. The biggest military migration of all came after 1914 when the turmoil in Mexico approached the Rio Grande, and hungry bands to the south were ignoring the boundary line. Following the military occupations, land companies filled the newly cleared brush country with civilian families, known as Homeseekers.

During the early sixteenth century, nomadic tribes of Indians, some semi-civilized, some savage and others cannibal, inhabited the Lower Rio Grande and Lower Gulf Coast regions. About that time Cortez and his Conquistadores were disembarking at Veracruz. This region, between the Nueces and the Rio Grande, covered miles of semi-arid wild land, cut only by occasional trails of animals or Indians. Most of the latter were guided by the coastline in wandering over the region which centuries later was to be marked off as Texas. Others roamed the sandy wastes of Padre Island, separated from the mainland by a narrow lagoon.

South of the Rio Grande, the same land—overgrown with mesquite and cactus—stretched for many miles until it blended into semi-tropical regions. These in turn fused into an immense jungle, some of it still unexplored today, known as the Huasteca, whence the Panuco River flows toward the famous Tampico petroleum region.

In 1526, a group of Spaniards established a small settlement on the Panuco. This was part of the second phase of the Conquest. Mexico City had been subjugated. Cortez was sending men in every direction, toward Guatemala, to the west, toward the Rio Grande. From the Panuco, a small party moved northward, about the year 1521, to explore the coast of the Mexican Gulf. They were the first Old-World people to find the lower reaches of the Rio Grande—"Big River." Some called the river, "Rio Bravo," the *bravo* meaning wild, untamed. This exploring party did not settle, but recorded the existence of the river as a big, muddy, navigable stream.

In 1528, the great Spanish explorer, Cabeza de Vaca, reached Texas. His wanderings carried him to the Rio Grande, to El Paso, and the Mexican west coast.

During the next two hundred years, as the Spaniards advanced the Conquest of Mexico, there were great migrations of Indians toward the north and east. These were stubborn

Indians who migrated. They did not want to be "civilized," but their weapons of resistance were weak against such civilizing instruments as muskets and cannon. The next best thing was to flee. The fugitive Indians were spared the joys of civilization for quite a while.

By the middle of the eighteenth century, the great battle royal for the New World was in full swing, with the Kings and Queens of Britain, France and Spain pushing more and more into the Red Man's unhappy hunting grounds. In the Spanish sphere of influence, a good bit of the conquest was effected via the chromosome route. The Angles and Saxons leaned a little heavier toward the direct blood-letting school, with the slogan:

"The only good Indian is a dead Indian."

The Spaniard was aware of the urgent need to push colonization northward. Jose de Escandon, then governor of Seno Mexicano (later to become the state of Tamaulipas), arranged, in 1746, for a series of expeditions to establish Iberian domination of the Rio Grande country. The idea was to stake a claim northward until it bumped into somebody else's claim. Indians didn't count, for this was strictly a European game. In 1747, seven expeditions organized by Escandon trailed through what later became northern Mexico to found settlements on the Rio Grande, and even as far as the Nueces, in the vicinity of present day Corpus Christi. The region was mapped, named Nuevo Santander and Nuevas Filipinas, and more than a dozen prospective colonies were marked on the charts.

Later a caravan of more than three thousand colonists, including several hundred soldiers, set out from Queretaro to settle the Rio Grande. They founded Camargo, not far from where Rio Grande City now stands. Then Reynosa, Mier, Laredo, Revilla, and San Fernando, the last named about sixty miles south of the Rio Grande. In 1765 a com-

munity known as San Juan de los Esteros was established. It became the nucleus of Matamoros, across the Rio Grande from what is now Brownsville.

The modern history of Matamoros began with the declaration of independence by Mexico in 1810. The town became an important commercial and military center, halfway point for the wagon trains that moved between the Nueces settlements and the interior of Tamaulipas. It was also the loading point for river freight carried on small boats. Matamoros and its little suburb on the north bank were concentration points for the Mexican army that sought to quell the revolt of the Texans in 1836. Between that date and 1846, when Manifest Destiny and the army of General Zachary Taylor carried the American flag to the Rio Grande, the region between that river and the Nueces remained a No Man's Land, claimed by both Mexico and Texas.

Actually it was a land without any government and it was inhabited by desperadoes, bandits, rustlers, adventurers, itinerant traders, smugglers, and a varied assortment of fugitives from justice and fugitives from injustice. Lawless Texans harassed Mexican ranchers, raided their cattle, preyed on their vehicles. Lawless Mexicans at the same time harassed Americans. Neither the Mexicans nor the Texans showed much discrimination with regard to nationality of their victims. Clashes between Texan and Mexican cowboys grew into feuds, fights for wild horses became bloody wars, dispute over seizure of loot turned into pitched battles.

Among the most famous of these wild country rangers was Ewen Cameron. His band was known as Cameron's Cowboys. The county of which Brownsville is the county seat was named after this typical Texas frontier character. Later he became a hero, as a result of the daring Mier Expedition (1842) when a company of fewer than three hundred Texans stormed the Mexican border town of Mier. The Texans were

captured, and their fate provided the memorable and dramatic story of the "Lottery of Death."

The lottery of death was played with black beans and white beans. Nine black beans to every white one. A black bean meant death. Cameron drew a white one, but it did him no good. He was executed by express orders of Santa Anna, the villain of the Texas War for Independence. This was but one of a number of incidents so devoutly wished for by the expansionists in Washington. It helped to lay the foundation for the annexation of Texas and the War with Mexico, ending in 1848 with the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo and transfer of half of the Mexican territory to Uncle Sam. Several important battles of this war were fought in the vicinity of Brownsville. All have been appropriately perpetuated for posterity with granite and bronze markers erected during the celebration of the Texas Centennial in 1936.

*There was a noble Ranger, and they called him Mustang  
Gray.*

*He left his home when but a youth, went ranging far  
away,*

*But he'll go no more a-rangin', the savage to affright,  
He's heard his last war-whoop and fought his last good  
fight.*

*He wouldn't sleep within a tent, no comforts would he  
know,*

*But like a brave old Texan, a-rangin' he would go.  
When Texas was invaded by a mighty tyrant foe,  
He mounted his good war-horse and a-rangin' he did go.  
Once he was taken prisoner and bound in chains upon  
the way.*

*He wore the yoke of bondage through the streets of  
Monterrey.*

*A señorita loved him, and followed by his side.  
She opened wide the gates, gave him her father's steed to  
ride.*

*God bless the señorita, the Belle of Monterrey,*

*She opened wide the prison door and let him ride away.  
And when the veteran's life was spent, it was his last  
command,*

*To bury him on Texas soil, on the banks of the Rio  
Grande.*

*And there the lonely traveler, when passing by his grave,  
Will shed a farewell tear o'er the bravest of the brave.*

*Now he goes no more a-rangin' the savage to affright,  
For he's heard his last war-whoop and fought his last good  
fight.*

Traders and settlers came in the wake of military conquest, and soon the process of border growth, turbulent, disordered, bloody, had hit its stride. Americans raided Mexicans and Mexicans raided Americans. The decade prior to the Civil War saw the rise of Juan Nepumoceno Cortina, native of Brownsville, called a bandit by many Americans and hailed as a gallant and redeeming hero by many Mexicans. With the Civil War came the blockade of the Confederate ports. This shunted practically all southern traffic to the Rio Grande. Overnight, Brownsville grew into one of the major Confederate ports. Matamoros mushroomed into a big city. From all over the world, traders and speculators and adventurers came to reap the golden harvest of war trade. Cotton for Europe, munitions and war supplies for the South, laid the foundations for great fortunes.

At the same time, south of the Rio Grande, Juarez and Maximilian were fighting what was to be a showdown. The North sympathized with Juarez, and so did, naturally, the Union troops. The South was friendly to Maximilian, and her troops looked with kindly eyes on the French and Austrian soldiers fighting on the side of the Clerical-Reactionary Alliance. While the pro-Maximilian Confederates had Brownsville, the Liberals (the Juarez anti-Maximilian party) held Matamoros.

After the Civil War, colonization of the border country was resumed. Through the years, Brownsville has attracted people from all over the world. Many nationalities have left their marks on its architecture and its language and customs. This happened in varying degrees in other border towns as well. The steadiest stream of settlers in the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries came from Mexico, during the rise and fall of Porfirio Diaz. Diaz himself had used Brownsville as a base from which to launch a revolution that raised him to power. Americanization of the border, first gradual, and recently more accelerated, continued to be influenced, transformed, even absorbed and assimilated at times into the basic—and stronger—Spanish-Mexican cultural pattern. But the growing economic domination by the Anglo-Saxon is making deep impressions on this basic matrix.

A conscious effort to preserve the Spanish-Mexican traditions produced Charro Days. It was not only a revival of northern Mexican lore, but also a reassertion by the South Texan, the border Texan—sometimes facetiously called the “Texican”—of that spirit which made some of the earlier Texans balk at annexation to an East-dominated United States. That same spirit has led them at different times to talk of an independent Republic of the Rio Grande or Republic of Sierra Madre, and more recently of a separate state, the forty-ninth. Annexation of Texas was carried through with a provision that the people of Texas could, if they saw fit, divide the state into five states.

The full emotional liberation provided by the Charro Days Fiesta must have been immediately evident to anyone who heard the shrill cries that accompanied the chanting of Mexican tunes by the Anglo-American-Texans. All of this, I felt, should have been happening in Mexico. But there it was, not on the south, but on the north, bank of the Rio Grande.

In the evening, there was Angel Pineapple, the troubador, sitting and drinking in the best restaurant in town.

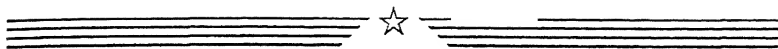
Mr. Pineapple, I saw, had got gray and his years were beginning to show. But Mr. Pineapple was not beaten. Far from it. He had mellowed, yes. His character was still intact, as well as his sense of humor and his great understanding. He seemed, nevertheless, a little weary; disillusioned, but not sour. The glare of noon-day lucidity, glimpses into a world not quite his, had strained the eyes of his soul a bit, and it felt good to blink them.

A great deal has happened to Mr. Pineapple from the time he left his home in Mexico as a youth, came to the United States, acquired The Two Nations. Since the war days on the border, he has been many places and done many things. But I shall let him tell his story, without interruption, as he told it during Charro Days, while we drank *mezcal*—with lemon and salt as chasers—all night long, and far into the next morning.

"THE SHERIFF SMILED..."







# V

## ODYSSEY

SEÑOR, it is a whole book you should be writing about me, and not only a part of one. Maybe some day, when I am again in Mexico with my children and the days are long and sweet, I myself will fill the hours by putting down the many things that have happened to me. You know my two sons are going to the Mexican repatriates' colony in Tamaulipas, and there they will build a house and begin to farm the land. Then they will send for me. Perhaps then I shall no longer have to be reminded that when you are living among jackals you have to become a jackal yourself or else they will eat you. But even the jackal is not so bad because you know how he will act. What we must never forget is that when the snake goes to make love he puts his fangs away.

Mexico, you see, is really not my country, although somehow I know it is there I shall feel more at home. I say it is not, because I left when I was so young. Many Americanos have told me that they, too, feel more at home in Mexico. It is another world, maybe? And this world here, in the United States and Texas, it is not all bad. So many things are nice, and pretty, and pleasant, but there is also so much bitterness. One like me can tell you best about your own country maybe. We who travel along in the ditches at the side of the road sometimes see more and hear more and understand more than those who ride in swift automobiles on the pave-

ment. They are getting places, they think, but every time they get some place, it is only to rest up and start for another place. And they miss so much in their going and coming that many times I have felt very sorry for them. Funny, is it not? Because every once in a while one stops and looks at me and he feels sorry for me. My life reminds me sometimes of a ballad called *La Maquinita*, the little machine, that I learned from some railroad workers. It goes like this:

*A railroad man on a toot one day  
Sang a song and his friend did play;  
The men lined up along the bar  
To hear the music of the gay guitar:  
Like a trip on a train  
Life moves from day to day.  
Engine steams down the lane,  
Toot! Toot! and away, away!*

You know about The Two Nations. My children have now grown up, and many fat days and many lean days have marched over the cliff into the pit with no bottom. Some of those days I would like to have back, and I live them over again many times. It is my only treasure and it is nice to think that nobody can take that away from me. But some of the other days I do not even care to think about. They go wandering in the endless world of yesterday, like souls that are lost, that have no home, and can find no peace. They come back in my sleep sometimes to torture me.

The Two Nations was not the beginning. It was the end of one life for me, a life that started in the little Mexican town where I was born. When The Two Nations was no more, I began another life. But let me take another drink, and then I shall start at the very beginning.

Ah, this is a wonderful drink, this *mezcal*. We say it was made so that the lemon and the salt that follow will taste so

good, and lemon and salt are very good for you. For us, the *mezcal* and *tequila* are not only drinks. They are medicine, good medicine, for the spirit and for the body. You know that with the *mezcal* we can make a medicine that will cure any disease, bad sickness like consumption and cancer and the sickness of the soul. That is when the devils put an iron ring around your head and tighten it and tighten it till you are ready for anything if only they will stop and take the iron ring off and let your head cool. It is good medicine, and I shall tell you how it is made. First, and most important, you must get a bottle of good, ripe *mezcal*. Then you must get some leaves and twigs from a blooming *palo verde* tree, which is also called *retama*. Then some cinnamon, stick cinnamon, and some *piloncillo*, that is solid brown sugar, some spearmint, and some sage leaves, cloves, a little garlic, and one ball of nutmeg. You cook the sugar and the cinnamon and the sage leaves in some water, and then you add the cloves and the garlic and the spearmint. It should all be stirred very well, and it is better if it is made on the night of a new moon. When it is finished you put it in an earthenware crock to cool, and while it is cooling, you pronounce these verses:

*St. John, St. John, to you I pray,  
Please take these awful pains away.  
Cure my ills and a gift I'll bring,  
Candles and cakes and everything.*

When the mixture is all cool, you stir it again, and then you pour it into a bottle into which you have first placed some anise water. Next you put a cork in the bottle and set it in a dark corner. The *mezcal*? Oh, yes, I nearly forgot. You drink the *mezcal*, and then you drink some more *mezcal*, and if you drink enough your troubles all will be gone. A good joke, is it not? We can laugh at these things, but some-

times they are very good, these home-made cures. Maybe I shall take you to the *curandero*, the witch-doctor, near San Benito, and he can tell you about these things.

We laugh, but we believe, too. Just like we make jokes about the Virgin, but we love the Virgin. My friend who is a conductor on the National Railways makes a wise-crack if the good people in a village say to him, when the train starts away:

"May you travel with God!"

He smiles, and he answers:

"You can have God. I'd rather be with the Virgin!"

It sounds terrible, no? But he wears a silver medal around his neck, and on it is a picture of the Virgin of Guadalupe, and he goes to mass.

I, too, used to be religious when I was a little boy, but we find out so many things when we grow older that religion does not mean so much. We are not against it, understand me, but we come to look on it as a nice pastime, like a show maybe, or to be with other people. Maybe the people who do wrong all the time need it. We who do our work and mind our business and help where we can, we don't really miss it. Many are religious because they are afraid to die. I say it is nothing to die, but to live, ah, that is something, as my father, may his soul rest in peace, used to say. Most of us are what you call fatalists. We think when our time is coming, it is coming, and that is all there is to it.

An uncle of mine used to say that every time a child is born, a candle is lighted in Heaven. There are millions and millions of candles, each one for one man or woman or child. Some are tall and just beginning to burn, some are nearly all burned down, but the flame is the same size on each one. Every day God opens the window in Heaven to let in some fresh air, and the wind goes through and it blows out many candles, some that have just begun, and some that are nearly

finished, but to the wind it makes no difference, and when the flame dies, the person it stands for dies, and it does not matter where he is or what he is doing, and it does not matter if he is rich or he is poor, whether he is humble or he is mighty, whether he is an honest man or a hypocrite and a cheat.

Maybe God has a way of settling all these things later. I used to think so when I was an altar boy in the church in Mexico City. I was an orphan, you know, and I never knew my mother. My father died when I was a very little boy. He went to the Revolution, and I stayed with an uncle in the village of La Tuna. A tuna is a prickly pear, which my people there all use as food. The pear itself, you know, we eat like fruit, and the leaves of the cactus plant—after the thorns are burned off—we chop up and mix with other vegetables and spices into a kind of salad, which is very good to the taste and it is very cheap.

Sometimes I laugh when I hear somebody say that the people in the villages are all good Catholics and that the government has been bad because it was taking away their religion. The stories I could tell you about the priests! And what the people think about them. But that would take me too long. I could sit here for two days and two nights just telling you about the feud between the priest and the witch-doctor in La Tuna. Both of them claimed to have what you call an inside track with God. Only they had different ways of proving it to the people. The witch-doctor used to cut out little paper dolls to hang over the doorways of the people who got sick or who were suffering, and he used to give them different things to eat and to drink. The priest used to scare the people or try to, telling them to take down the paper dolls and to trust the Virgin and the Saints. The people did not take any chances. They hung up the paper dolls, and they also prayed to the Saints.

It was real funny when the bellyache came, and everybody in the village got sick. Then it was a real test of the witch and the priest. The padre lost his temper once and tore down one of the paper dolls. Next morning when he came out, there were some paper dolls stuck up on his door. And in the evening he got sick with the bellyache, very very sick. After two or three days, he got worse and worse. Then his servant went secretly to see the witch-doctor, and he gave her some medicine. She made the sick padre drink it, but did not tell him where she got it. He got well, but he never knew that it was the witch-doctor who had made him sick and then had made him well again. Everybody else in the village knew, but did not tell him. They kept on going to the witch-doctor, and were as devout as ever in the church.

But I was going to tell you about Mexico City, when my uncle moved there and I was an altar boy. We lived in a neighborhood with many people, and right in the middle of the neighborhood there were two blocks of special houses. Everybody said they belonged to some very rich old ladies who went to the main cathedral and gave lots of money to the church, so they must have been very good ladies. In the houses, a lot of women came to work. Being children, we did not know just what kind of work they did, but we were plenty curious. Once I peeked inside one of the houses, but I didn't see anything except a big bed and a washbasin, and a lot of pictures on the wall, pictures of Saints, and pictures of women with no clothes on. And a table with a statue of the Virgin and a candle in a colored glass burning in front of it.

Excuse me now, señor, while I take another drink. You will have one, too, no? I guess I would not be telling you all these things if it was not for the *mezcal*. It is a good medicine to loosen the tongue, too, and to make people bring out things they should keep locked up in their heads.

*Like a trip on a train,  
Life moves from day to day:  
Engine steams down the lane,  
Toot! Toot! and away, away!*

One day, I guess I must have been about ten or eleven years old then, one of the other altar boys said to me that we should go to see the *putas*. They are the women who have love for sale, as we say. There was something mysterious to us about the word, full of adventure, but not very clear just what. And I had not at all connected it with the women who worked in our neighborhood. Because in the neighborhood the people never used the word *putas*. The women who worked there ate in the little lunch stands or had their shoes repaired in the neighborhood, or bought things at the grocery. If somebody asked the storekeeper who is that, she would just answer, "One of the women." The neighborhood always spoke of them just that way, the women, and they addressed them as "Señora," that is to say, "Mrs." just as they would speak to any woman who came in and who might be just another customer.

We knew, my little friend and I, that we had to have money to see the *putas*, for we had heard stories told by the older boys at times, without entirely understanding just what it was all about. But we knew that it was always connected with drinking and spending money. Some of the big boys used to brag about how much money they had spent in one night.

I guess I ought to be ashamed to tell you about this, but it is very funny to me now and very sad. My friend and I were in charge of the collection plates passed around during the services at our church. And when we decided to go to the *putas*, we each kept out fifty centavos from the collection money before we turned it over to the sexton. And as soon

as we got out of the church, we got together at the next corner, and I asked my friend if he knew where to find the *putas*. He said yes, that they were over in the *Calle de los Pajarillos*, which means "The Street of the Little Birds." That's my neighborhood, I said; all of a sudden it came to me that The Women of our neighborhood were the *putas*. We were very scared that somebody might see us, and we were scared also because we didn't know what would happen when we went into one of those rooms. We were not innocents exactly, either, since we had made the discovery long ago about what made little girls different from little boys.

But we were not really ripe, you know. I was terribly scared when we went into the first house and I was glad when the woman told us to go home to our *mamas* and to send our fathers around. A few doors farther down, a very fat woman stopped us and wanted to know where we were going and she invited us to come in. She took all her clothes off, and when we saw all the folds of her belly we looked at each other and we looked at her again, and then we both began giggling, and when she saw us laughing, she began to laugh, too. That made us all friends. So when she asked us if we had any money with us, we told her yes, and how much, and she asked if we wanted to have some fun. She took our money, but when she told us to take off our clothes, my friend let out a scream and ran for the door. For a split-second I hesitated between the woman and the bright sunlight I saw through the door, left half-open by my fleeing companion. Then I ran out, too. It was what the military man would call a baptism of fire.

But look, the bottle is empty. Is it not time for us to open this other one? And in the meantime, before I go on with my story I shall sing you a *corrido* about the border. A *corrido* is what you call a ballad. The name of this one is *El Corrido de Cananea*, the Ballad of Cananea, a mining town near the

border. It is about a man who gets in trouble on the border and is arrested by the sheriff and he escapes and they chase him over the mountains and the rivers, and through many towns. The song will help me to remember many things that happened to me after I left Mexico and went across the border to that strange land we always heard about, the United States.

*Voy a dar los pormenores  
Lo que a mí me ha pasado,*

*Sali de Cananea,  
Con el fusil en la mano,  
Y allá me llevaron preso,  
Al estilo Americano.*

And they arrested me, the song says, American style arrest. Is not that funny? For the American style arrest, with the sheriff, is so different from the Mexican style arrest.

I was sixteen years old when my uncle took me to Monterrey, where there was to be a fair. He was going to put up a stand and sell candies and dried meats from Oaxaca. The Revolution was starting again. There was a lot of talk that everybody would have to go into the army. Señor, I had no wish to become a soldier, so I waited for my chance and I went to Nuevo Laredo. I stayed a few days till I saw how the people who live there go across to the other side and come back every day. Then one day I went across to the American side, only I did not go back. Nobody asked me any questions, except, "Say, boy, do you want a job?" Everywhere there were jobs, but not enough people for them. I had only a few pesos with me and I went into a rooming house, what we call a dormitory for men, and I got a place to sleep, a cot in a room with about ten more, for fifteen cents a night. Next morning I went to the little lunchroom downstairs to get my coffee and sweetbread. I asked the lady there why there were so many jobs. She said it was always that way during the

cotton season, that everybody left town to go into the fields to pick cotton. That way the whole family can work, and so they make much more than if only one or two have jobs in town. When the cotton season is over, they come back and spend their money. Then it is not so easy to find jobs any more.

First I thought I would go to pick cotton, but I had never done that before. I stopped in front of a store to look at the overalls and the straw hats in the window. All the clothes looked strong with lots of sewing on them, and edges of copper on the pockets. A short man with a red face came out of the store and asked me if I wanted to buy some pants. I told him that I did not, that I was looking for a job. He said he could give me a job if I would not go off tomorrow to pick cotton.

I said all right, and I went to work for him. His name was Mr. Lartz, a very good man, very jolly, making fun all the time. He was very good to all the girls who worked in his store, and to me. Never will I forget Mr. Lartz. He gave me a place to stay, and food, and he did not take it out of my wages. He told me to save my money, that I would need it some day, and it was through his advice that I saved enough so I could quit my job and leave town. He did not pay the girls any higher wages than the other storekeepers, because the others would have been angry. They had an understanding among themselves as to what the wages should be. But he would lend us all money, two dollars or three a week each. Nobody ever thought of paying it back, and he did not expect it. When any of the girls or their families got sick, he would pay their doctor bills and buy their medicine. One time I asked him what his religion was, and what kind of God he believed in, and he said the only religion he had was to do good when he could, and that he did not expect to go to Heaven.

Maybe the main reason I remember him so kindly is that he got me the doctor and the medicine to cure me when I got an attack of *purgacion*. It was terrible, an awful experience, and later I got so I could joke about it, but believe me it was not a joke then. Not only was the pain so bad, and the fever, but there is something about such a disease that depresses your spirit, and it is not difficult to think of killing yourself. In Spanish we call it *purgacion*, because, I guess you could say it really is a purgation, maybe something like going through purgatory. He let me stay away from work till I got well.

This man Lartz must have been some kind of a saint to put up with me the way he did. After all he did for me, I repaid him by quitting without giving him any notice, no more than a day, because I had signed up with a contractor to go up the country to pick beets. But Mr. Lartz did not get mad at me. He said every man ought to try to better himself, but he warned me about the beet contractors and their tricks. You are young, though, he said, and the things I say to you will leave you like water off a duck's back. You want to see things for yourself, you want to move around, you have to have lessons beaten into you. You would have it easier staying here, but if you have anything to you, the knocking around will bring it out. It was like a father talking to his own son. I have not been able to understand why some people say Jews are bad. Mr. Lartz was a Jew and he was very good to me.

Excuse me, señor, for these tears but there are some things we cannot think of without breaking through like this. Do you know how I repaid Mr. Lartz's kindness? Oh, what an ingrate I was. When I left, señor, I took a new pair of shoes and a Stetson hat, and I did not pay for them. He would have given them to me if I had asked, but I stole them like a common thief, and it has been my punishment ever since to carry

that shame with me. When I think of it, I remember the story that my uncle used to tell me about the man who saved the snake that had been caught in a coyote trap. And I begin to understand how true the story was even if it was only a fable, an old grandmother's tale. The man pulled the snake out of the trap, and when the reptile was free it turned on the man to attack him.

"But, wait," the man said to the snake, "I saved your life. I did you a good turn. How could you think of repaying this good of mine by doing something bad to me. You know that is not right."

"I don't know whether it is right or not," the snake answered, "but that is the way things are done."

Just then a coyote arrived, and he was asked to decide.

"Let me see how things were before all this happened," the coyote said. "Here, snake, get back into the trap and show me just how you were, and the man can show me just what he did."

The snake got back into the trap. The man fastened it, and the coyote said:

"Well, things look all right to me. Why not just leave them this way?"

The man realized that the coyote had saved his life.

"Come to my house," he told the coyote, "and I shall repay you. I have a nice fat chicken that you will like."

When they got to the house, the man turned his dogs loose, and as the coyote ran toward the woods, he shouted back:

"Why do you do a thing like this? I did you a good turn and saved your life. It is not right."

"Maybe not," the man answered, "but that's the way things are done."

Is it not time for another drink, señor?

Yes, you have to be on your toes in this world or it will

get away with you. We have an old saying that the fish that falls asleep will be carried out to sea by the river. That beet-picking contractor nearly got away with me. I was fool enough to believe all his promises about how nice it would be to work in Colorado, how cool the climate was, what big wages we would get, and all the rest of his lies.

Of course all this time I had not even begun to learn any English because I did not have any need for it. On the border, everybody spoke Spanish. Even the contractor for the beet-picking, who was a countryman of mine, with shame let it be said, for he was an instrument for fooling his own kind. Lower than that I do not think any man can sink, and I can say that and know what I say because I myself have come very close to the same thing during some of my most trying days. The contractor was not interested in whether I had ever picked beets before. All he asked me was if I knew any English, and if I had my immigration papers in order. I told him all the English I knew were three or four words like *gardemmit* and *sahnavavichy*, and that I did not have any immigration papers at all. He said, "Good," but I did not know what he meant by that till it was my misfortune to find out in Colorado. There, too, my education began in the strange world of the English language.

You know, señor, how things are in the beet fields and in the cotton fields and the fruit orchards, wherever we poor devils have been taken. You know how we live in crowded shacks. It was not so bad for me, being single. After all, there was not so much difference between sleeping in a bunkhouse with fifteen or twenty other men and sleeping in a dormitory in town in the same conditions. But the families were really bad off. Eight or ten or fifteen people, men, women and children, crowded into one little hut. They did not pay the wages they promised, either. Everybody had to buy from the field store at the prices they wanted to charge

us. And then, after they had promised to pay us for transportation, they said no, that we would have to pay our own, and that it would come out of our wages. The families were stuck and could do nothing about it.

Some of us single fellows thought, Well, even if things were not what they promised, we could pick up and go, and figure that we had learned a sad lesson. Not even that. Four of us tried it, and we had not got two miles when a couple of deputy sheriffs stopped us. They said we would have to go back, that we were breaking our contract, and that the farmer had spent money to get us there, and we would have to work it out. One of the men protested and said something about peonage. The deputy sheriff laughed and said he was not trying to arrest us to pay off a debt. But he could put us all in jail for vagrancy, because we had no jobs and no money. Besides, there were some immigration men in town who would like very much to find out that some of us had come into the country without paying the eight-dollar head-tax. Also that we had no papers to show that we are entitled to stay here. Did we want to go back to Mexico and be forced to join one of the armies in the Revolution? These were very strong arguments, señor, so we said it would be a pleasure to go back and pick beets under any conditions. I heard these same arguments, and lived through the same experiences many times after that in the Texas cotton fields. We knew that the contractors would not hesitate to turn us in to the immigration, because we knew of some cases where they done that very thing so they would not have to pay off the wages they had collected for the men.

Oh, it was not all bad out there in the fields. You know, it is much worse for some who have seen other kinds of work and who know that things don't have to be that way, that they can be better. For those who have been doing that same thing all their lives, and who cannot do anything else, it has

become the regular thing, and many of them have got so used to it they would not try anything else. The next field, the next season, always looks as if it might be better. I know that for me, señor, the days and nights in the beet fields were a wonderful school.

God knows the work was hard enough, and that the pay was so little you could hardly see it. But I was young, and money did not seem so very important. We had very many beautiful nights. On payday we had card games and dice games, and every Saturday night there was a *baile*, a dance, on the little platform near the field store. One owner had that built to keep his workers from going off to the other fields, and soon all the owners were doing the same thing. Now the farmers have an association and they agree what to give the pickers and what not.

In the fields we learned much from one another, for many of the pickers had not always been pickers, and they had come from different parts of Mexico and the United States. Some of them had been to places like Seattle, New York, Chicago, New Jersey, Buffalo, Detroit, Los Angeles, San Francisco, which seemed to us then like some enchanted lands, for all those who had been there told of the most wonderful experiences. Many of them were lies, señor, of course, but, oh, such beautiful lies! I was determined that even if I did nothing else that some day I would go to all those places where Mexicans were not called greasers, where beautiful women were hungry for romance with Latin Americans, where good jobs were plentiful. I knew, too, that I would go some day, but I had no idea that I would have to pass myself off as an Arizona Indian in order to keep from being deported.

It was in the beet fields that I first learned to play the guitar. It is this same guitar you see here which has been with me all these years, although for a while, when I became

a business man, I did not play it so often. If I had been trained, I am sure that I would have been a very fine musician. I pick up music as a blotter sucks ink. I found some beautiful songs in the fields of beet and cotton, and even in the cities, especially in the jails. It is a funny thing for me to be saying, but I must tell you that some of the finest Americans I have met, some of the Texans who are what we call *buena gente*, that is, real people, decent people, I have had the good fortune to meet in the jailhouses. You know it is not difficult to get into jail in this country if your pants are not pressed just right and if you are not wearing a necktie, and especially if you happen to have a dark skin or speak with an accent. And for many years I did not press my pants, and I speak, as you can observe, with a bit of an accent.

Did you ever hear the song they call "Poor Boy?" It is so good that it should have been written by a Mexican. I learned it in the jail at Houston, and I have heard, and I have sung it in other jails, too. Listen:

*There I was all set to play cooncan  
But I could not play my hand,  
For thinking about the woman I loved,  
She ran away with another man.  
Oh, judge! Judge, judge! Oh, judge!  
What you-all goin' to do with me?  
If the jury finds you guilty, lad,  
You're off to the penitentiary.  
The jury, it found me guilty,  
Poor boy, poor boy.  
The clerk, he wrote it down.  
Not one friend I got  
In the whole wide world,  
Not a home in any town.  
My mother lies in the cold, cold clay,  
My old man, he ran away, away.*

*My sister's married to a gambling man,  
And now I've gone astray.  
As I went down to the depot,  
The train came rushing by,  
Sittin' in the window  
Was my woman, oh, how I did cry.  
Oh, the night was dark and stormy,  
And I could never be the same,  
Not one friend in the whole wide world,  
Nobody even knows my name.  
Down at the penitentiary,  
In the cell picked out for me,  
I heard them all a-singin'  
Soon, soon, you will be free.*

This kind of song is very much like the songs of the Mexicanos, señor, because we like so much to sing about sad things and about the women we love but who do not return our love. And we also like to sing songs, and who does not, about what brave men we are. And we have our heroes, too, the heroes of the history books, as well as the heroes of the imagination, of the story-teller. Perhaps you have not heard of the great Pedro Malo. The word *malo* means bad or evil, but in the name of Pedro Malo it is ironical, much in the manner that you would scold a lad as "bad boy" for some little trifle of a pecadillo.

Pedro was a Mexican cowboy who was afraid of nothing—something like the famous Texas cowboy, Pecos Bill—the kind of daring fellow that every humble cowboy likes to imagine himself, especially when things are not going so good and he finds his own strength failing under the weight of many problems and difficulties. The story is told that Pedro died, but did not go to Heaven, or rather, he went there, took one look, and decided that it was no place for him, because it was much too tame, and he didn't think he

would have any fun there. After all, Pedro had been to many places, working on ranges. He punched cattle in Canada, in Mexico, in the Argentine, and even herded sheep in Australia for a while. I am not sure whether he ever met your Paul Bunyan or Pecos Bill, but I know that they would have had big times, big, big times together, for they certainly are all of the same family.

But it turned out that even Hell was too tame for Pedro after having lived in Texas. He walked right through a thousand flames and then he sat down in the hottest fire, right alongside the Boss Devil himself, pulled out his sack of tobacco and began rolling himself a cigarette. Even the Devil was amazed, for he had certainly never seen a creature like this one before. Pedro thought he would have some fun with the old Devil. He told him about what a delightful place Texas is, and that the Devil ought to be able to have a dog-gone good time there.

So the Devil went to Texas, and he really found himself a Hell then. First he picked some beautiful berries, red and green, which looked so tempting nobody could resist them. He swallowed a handful of them and soon began hollering for help. What a joke on the Devil! Any Mexicano can eat chile peppers all day long and never let out a whimper. Next the Devil spied some pretty purple fruit.

"What beautiful plums," he said, and he filled his mouth with *tunas*, the prickly pear fruit, but he didn't know that the thorns have to be burned off first. You can imagine what they did to him.

About this time, the Devil felt a terrible headache coming on and he began to perspire streams of liquid sulphur.

"Hell is Heaven compared to this place," he cried, and went back to the Inferno to cool off. The Texas heat had beat the Devil!

And Pedro Malo laughed loud and long. Maybe he is

still laughing. They say if you rub two cactus leaves together, you can hear Pedro laughing, and if you rub the pods of chile pepper you can hear the Devil gritting his teeth. But, *quien sabe?*

To your health, señor! *Salud!* Is it not time to open a new bottle? When I finish this drink, we shall have with us what you call another deceased dragon.

Maybe you would not guess, from hearing me talk now, what a terrible time I had learning the American language. Since the days of my first beet field adventure, I have talked much English, and I have studied it, too, something which many of you Americanos do not feel the need for. You see the result. My English is far superior to that spoken by many Americans. I know more words and I speak more correctly, all of which I say to you with modesty, but with justice.

But those early days! For a while I almost starved to death, with plenty of money in my pockets, because I could not order anything but coffee in the restaurants. Then I learned how to say ham and eggs, or thought I had learned, after carefully studying the sign on the window. Now I know that my pronunciation made it sound something like this: "Om ont ex." I sat down at the quick-lunch counter and asked for an order of that. The waiter just stared at me. He called a waitress, and I repeated it. She shrugged her shoulders. Then the Greek himself came over, and the same thing happened. It happened again in five more restaurants. At the next one I sat down and waited. A big fellow came and sat down next to me. He shouted to the waiter, something that sounded to me like, "Humnegzuveazy!" I waited patiently, pretending to be reading the menu, until his order was brought. There it was, ham and eggs, with the eggs turned over and cooked a little on the other side. So I shouted, "Humnegzuveazy!" and at last I was fed. I was charmed. I tried it at the next meal, and it still worked. And at the

next. Suddenly I was terrified at the prospect of having to eat ham-and-eggs-over-easy every day, maybe forever. But little by little, first by pointing, and then by learning other magic restaurant words like "ruzbifsanwsh" and "lemstoo" and "bowloats" I managed to keep from starving in the midst of plenty.

*Like a trip on a train,  
Life moves from day to day.  
Engine steams down the lane,  
Toot! Toot! and away, away!*

After Colorado, I went north, and for nearly four years I roamed in this country. I went to Los Angeles, and San Francisco and Seattle. I worked in fruit-picking, and on the docks, and in the canneries of salmon, and in the movies. From Seattle I worked my way across the country to New York. During all this time, I ate more with my eyes than with my mouth. The feast was one of seeing things, but the belly, it got flatter and flatter. Everywhere I went like the humble Texas bird, the road-runner, which cannot fly like other birds, although it has wings. It stays on the ground and dodges in and out of the brush. The bird reminds us of our humble selves so much we call it the *paisano*, which means countryman. Like my countrymen, it eats the poorest things, the things that are to be found within easy reach, for it cannot do as other birds, fly far away and seek the food wherever it may happen to be. It has to work hard in its own little field and make the best of it.

New York was for me a great place of wonder. Such beautiful girls, señor! And so many pretty things, all made by human beings, so many big and miraculous things, so much to do, so many places to go, so much to see. But no jobs. I could not stay. For the wheat harvest I went to Kansas, and I

saved enough money to take me to Dallas, and to pay my expenses while I looked for work.

In Dallas, I rented a room in a boarding house run by an American lady and her husband. All the roomers were Mexican men, no women. I had been there about a week when one night, just as I was getting ready to go to bed, the landlady came to my room. She had on a bathrobe. She told me to turn out the light. It was all like a strange dream. I made no protest when she took off her robe and got into bed with me. To tell you the whole truth, I was pretty lonely and glad for this little attention. She came the next night, too, and the following night, and so for about a week or ten days. Then she started buying clothes for me. I enjoyed it all right, till she began getting jealous, and did not want to let me out of the house at all. One day, while she was in town, I decided to leave, and I caught the bus to Houston.

Houston was then on a boom on account of oil hit in East Texas. There were lots of jobs, but something happened the first night that started me on a new career, a field of endeavor I had never touched before, and which I have not gone back to since. But often during these hard times I have been tempted to make use of the experience I gained during those two years in Houston. There is no use beating around the bush with you. You know life, so I shall be brief. But first I must have another drink. Señor, I became what you call a peemp, a professional man of the ladies.

Perhaps it is not really so bad as it sounds. I was very respectable and respected. Many of my friends were among the politicians and some substantial people of the city, and the policemen. You know the old saying, money washes away dirt, and gold speaks a language that all men seem to understand without too much trouble. It is a little sad to think about it this way sometimes. As the coyote said, it may not be right, but that is the way things are done.

This is how it happened. The night I got to Houston I made the rounds of some beer joints over on Congress Avenue. About two o'clock in the morning I got to one place that was nearly deserted. There were maybe four or five customers, and about eight or nine girls sitting around at different tables and booths. In one of the booths, a girl had passed out, and it looked like she vomited just at the same time. Her arms were stretched out over the table, and her face was right in the vomit, not in a big splash, but just a thin stream drooling from her mouth. Nobody paid any attention to her. The player piano was going—they did not have the pretty electric phonographs like today—and two couples were hopping around on the sawdust floor in a funny looking dance.

I felt sorry for the girl who had passed out without anybody taking care of her. I went over, and raised her head, and with my handkerchief I wiped the stuff off her mouth and made her sit up. I asked the others if anybody was coming for her. Most of the girls, you see, had boy friends who called when the place closed up, in case the girls did not have a date with a customer. They said no, and I found out where she lived—a dingy little hotel—and I took her there, and sobered her up a little, undressed her and put her to bed.

You know how we are, always looking for adventure. The next night I went back to the same joint. The girl was back, no worse off for the drunk of the night before. I walked over to her booth, and sat down, and asked her how she felt. She didn't know who I was at first, but she caught on because the other girls had told her how I had taken care of her when nobody else paid any attention to her. Well, señor, to make a long story a bit shorter, we drank and we danced, and by the next morning she had made me a proposition to be her boy friend. I accepted, and I have no regrets about it, señor, for those two years were very good to me. And I do not look upon the profession of peemp as anything of a lower category

than that of any other line of business. You can be a smart peemp or just a plain punk, like you can be a smart businessman or just a plain shopkeeper. Maybe it is not right that there should be prostitution and peemps, but that seems to be the way things are done in this world of ours. At no time, either, did I feel that the police were my enemies or what you call society was hounding me. Just the other way around. The police were really my friends and I was theirs. They understand that these things are because they are, and as long as there was no scandal, everything was okay.

I helped them, too, because I had all my girls watch out for strangers who might be wanted by the cops, and if there was any suspicious looking fellow turn up, you can be sure that the police were the first to know it. There is much talk, señor, about scientific crime detection and all that, but there is no method that they have found yet that can produce as many prisoners from among the professional criminals as the very ancient system of stoolpigeon. I had to laugh when they caught Two-Gun Beeley. The newspapers made such heroes out of the cops. One of my girls was the real hero. When Beeley got into the Moon-High hotel—that was one of the joints I controlled—one of my girls, a little dark-eyed kid named Lollie, took care of him. She saw a bunch of guns in the suitcase, and when she went out to the ladies' room, she tipped off the landlady, just as she had been told to do when she saw anything like that. Then Lollie went back to bed with Beeley. When the cops came, they had no trouble getting in, and Beeley and the girl were both asleep. Just to make it look all right, they took Lollie along too and for no reason at all, she got written up and had her picture in the papers as a gangster's moll. The other girls kidded her about taking a screen test.

When you are in a business like that, señor, you begin to understand many things which you might not otherwise. As

long as these things go on, why I understand that's the way things are. It also came to my mind that the business was really not so different in many ways from other things. I have been around enough to realize that lots of things people do for a living are really prostitution in one form or another. There are nicer words for it, señor, but much that goes under other names could be understood better if we called it by what it really is. The girls prostitute their bodies, yes, but how many are there who go about smugly prostituting their minds, and their souls?

The money I made in those two years I spent. I had a nice car, plenty of clothes, and a fine collection of phonograph records. I also bought myself maybe half a dozen expensive guitars, with gold and silver and pearl trimmings, but I could never get the tone from any of them that I could from this old cheap one. The upshot of all this was that one day there came a cleanup in the city. The police had not reformed, but there were other political scandals. So the city administration had to do something to get public attention off the really bad things that were going on, like the graft in the new buildings and the new street paving.

The girls went on to Dallas, where they got located with my old friend, Chippy. I took a trip to Mexico and then to San Antonio. I still had a little money, and I thought maybe I would go into some other kind of business, maybe open a restaurant, but I spent and spent, and soon the money was all gone.

My life changed again in San Antonio. It was during carnival time, the Fiesta de San Jacinto, the Battle of Flowers. There I met a young woman who became my sweetheart. Her father had a curio store and he had a little money saved away. About this time, many soldiers were being sent to the border, and other people were going there because business would be good where the army payroll would be spent.

But Concha, the girl I met in San Antonio, gave me a new feeling altogether. After I had been keeping company with her I wanted a home and children and to be like other people. She liked me a lot and I liked her. When her father made a proposition that he would set me up in the curio business in Granderio, I married Concha and that was the beginning of my family of nine children, señor, and also it was the beginning of The Two Nations, about which you already know.

The days of The Two Nations were very happy days for me, and even when business got bad and then worse, I was always looking for good times again. But they did not come back. The soldiers went away and then the Depression came. I went bankrupt, and I lost everything I had. There were no jobs, either, so I went up to San Antonio to look for work. I left my wife and family with her sister, who had a little farm near Granderio.

I went to San Antonio to look for a job.

One night I was sitting in a little lunch room eating a plate of beans, when a couple of fellows came in with guitars. They played and sang. When they finished, they passed their hats around among the customers. That gave me an idea.

I began making the rounds of cafes and beer joints at night. Soon I was picking up forty and fifty cents a night, and when I learned more about being a troubador, I began making as much as a dollar a night, only three or four hours a night of playing and singing. Some nights, I must tell you, I played all night long.

Since that time I have been a troubador, wandering all over this border country, señor, wherever there are *bailles* and fiestas. I make enough to send my family a little now and then. My boys are growing up and they help on the farm. It is not the best life, señor, but we make the best of it, like the old saying, "*Si tu mal tiene remedio, porque te apures? Y si no, porque te apures?*" Which says if your troubles can be

cured, why worry? And if they cannot be cured, what's the use of worrying?

To your health, señor, *Salud!*

*A railroad man on a toot one day,  
Sang a song and his friend did play;  
The men lined up along the bar,  
To hear the music of the gay guitar:  
Like a trip on a train,  
Life moves from day to day,  
Engine steams down the lane,  
Toot! Toot! and away, away!*



# VI

## RIO GRANDE

THE mysterious lights on the mesa alarmed people up and down the Rio Grande during the border troubles in the teens of the century. It all started with a sentry on lone duty, somewhere below El Paso. As he gazed across the mesa, looking into the darkness, he spied the blinking and flashing of lights. Then he saw the lights move along. Nothing else, only the lights.

The soldier had been on the border long enough to have heard some strange stories. The lights started his imagination in the direction of witches and ghosts and hobgoblins. All this seems far-fetched when you are far away, writing or reading or talking about these things. But if you happen to be out there alone on a night like that, these things become very real. You can feel them all around you, and it is no use trying to tell yourself that they are not there.

Next morning the soldier made his report. He told some of his companions about his experience, and soon the ball was rolling. The ghosts on the mesa became lost Spanish explorers hovering over buried gold. They became ranchmen who had mysteriously disappeared and had never been seen again. They were the spirits of men slain in border fights, come back to haunt their killers, maybe to start a new series of blood-feuds.

The military authorities took a more prosaic, but also in-

triguing, point of view. It was their belief that if lights were being flashed on the mesa, they were for the benefit of raiders across the Rio Grande, and the flashers must be spies. A detail was assigned to check up next night and to bring in whatever was found, provided, of course, that it could be brought in, that it did not turn out to be ectoplasm.

The detachment waited for the lights. The soldiers surrounded them, but the lights they found fell far short of being supernatural. They were produced by quite tangible coal oil, burning in a very tangible wick in a factory-made lantern. Two men with the lights were brought into the garrison, protesting all the way about the high-handed actions of the military.

Questioned by the commanding officer, they said they were prospectors, working a claim.

"At night?" asked the officer, with a burst of disciplined skepticism.

"Sure," one of them replied, "the gol-durn sun's so hot in the daytime a feller'd get a heat stroke in ten minutes. So we work when it's cool, and then sleep in the daytime."

It was said by some that those canny prospectors themselves had helped spread tales about ghosts and witches on the mesa in order to keep other people from digging in the same vicinity.

Ghosts by themselves provide only a narrow range for the teller of stories along the Rio Grande. Ranking high in interest among the folks of the border mountain country are things having to do with mines and mining. Nearly every man or woman you run into wants to get back to the diggin's as soon as possible. Every living soul has dreams of striking it rich, maybe in a mine or maybe in locating a choice bit of buried treasure.

Every possible source of buried treasure has been exploited in these stories, and the sources are as rich and varied

as the history of the region. There is, of course, the natural source, the actual mining of minerals. Then there are the rich hidden mines of the Indians, who kept their secrets and buried them, so that the White Man could never find them. Later came the Spanish Conquistadores, some of whom managed to get a good bit of Indian gold. Others, transferring huge cargoes of coins and jewels, were attacked, or got lost and perished, and the secret of their fabulous treasures died with them. Add to these the migrations of gold-hunters from Mexico, the hold-ups of stagecoaches and the bandit caches, the treasures brought over during innumerable Mexican revolutions.

Many stories told by border folk are heavily embroidered with miraculous discoveries or endowments of wealth, stories in which the universal longing for quick riches is often the butt of pointed satire. This satire, in turn, often sheds a lovely pearl of pungent folk wisdom.

Mr. Pineapple told some of these yarns, which he had tucked away in his curio-store brain during the years of his wanderings. His favorite was the story of The Money Tree and the Miser. It seems that in a lovely little mountain village, Somewhere, there lived an old miser. He had acquired great wealth by transactions in which invariably somebody was cheated. The old miser was so stubborn and so hard in his dealings, so cold and calculating, and so ignorant of even the simplest things, of everything in fact, except how to make more money, that the people came to call him the Burro of Gold. He had never been known to do anybody a good turn, and his answer to anyone who ever asked him for help was always the same:

"Do you think that money grows on trees?"

One of his victims decided to be avenged on the old miser, and he thought up a plan to pay the miser back in his own coin, make him swallow a dose of his own medicine. He

called on the numerous victims that had suffered in dealings with the Burro of Gold and told them of his scheme. He collected from them as many coins as he could, promising them that if the scheme worked they should all have their money returned manifold. Then he found a tree not far from where the old miser lived, and one night he went there and prepared the tree for his little plan.

Next morning, quite early, he passed by the miser's house, purposely of course, on his way to the tree. The Burro of Gold's curiosity was as great as his greed. He asked:

"Where are you going so early?"

"Oh, I am going up to my tree; I think the fruit is now ripe."

"But what kind of fruit is so precious that it would bring you so far over this way, and so early in the day?"

"The most precious fruit in all the world, as you will readily agree with me, Mr. Burro—gold. Did you not know that I have a tree of gold, which I bought from a mysterious traveler who came through here three years ago. I planted it and watered it and pruned it, as he told me, and it is now three years. He said that in three years it would bear its first crop, and I am now going to harvest it. That is why I have these big bags with me."

"Nonsense! Who ever heard of money growing on trees?"

"Well, good-by, I must be going. Perhaps I shall stop on the way back and show you some of the beautiful fruit that my tree is producing."

But the Burro of Gold did not wait. He followed close behind, not close enough, however, to be detected, he thought. The man saw him, though, but did not let on, and went along merrily, whistling and singing until he came to his tree. He set his bags down and began examining the tree, to give the Burro time to approach. The old miser hid in a clump just back of the tree and stared up in amazement at what he saw.

It was all covered with glistening gold coins. At the right moment, when he knew that the miser's mouth must have been frothing at the sight that confronted him, the man began picking, carelessly, a coin here, a coin there. Soon, just as he had planned, the Burro of Gold could no longer stand it, and came rushing toward the man.

"Wait! Wait!" he cried. "Let me look before you pick it clean. This is the most wonderful thing I have ever seen. How often does it bloom?"

"It bears a new crop every three months. But I must go on because it will take me all day to gather this crop. I could not afford to let this precious fruit remain on the tree overnight."

And he began picking coins again. Once more the miser stopped him, this time offering to buy the tree. The thought of anyone else owning such a wonderful treasure was too galling to endure. His most cunning wiles and arguments were turned on the very willing victim. They finally agreed that the miser would buy the tree, but he would have to give in return the whole chest of gold that he had hidden away in his hut. So he delivered the chest to the man, who returned to town.

The miser, meanwhile, started avidly grabbing and pulling at the few remaining coins on the tree, something he had not imagined possible even in his wildest dreams. After he had picked them all off he went home. Every day he returned to water the tree and to watch it carefully, and three months later he returned with some big bags to gather the gold, thinking what a fine bargain he had struck with the townsman.

In the meantime the latter had distributed the gold from the miser's hoard to all who had lent him a coin to put on the tree. The same day the miser went to look for his crop they all went up in the mountains to watch. For days and

days later they laughed about how the Burro of Gold looked when he found out that he had been tricked by his own greed.

Across all the border country stories like these travel, bouncing along on the plunging Rio Grande, from El Paso, through the cattle and sheep country, down to Roy Bean's old bailiwick and to the mouth of the Rio Grande.

The mighty Rio Grande roars down past El Paso, through the Davis Mountain country, toward Ojinaga-Presidio, on down through Santa Helena Canyon, past Johnson's Ranch and to the Mariscal Canyon in almost a beeline toward the Gulf of Mexico. Then it suddenly backs up and drives in a northerly direction toward Boquillas, making what has come to be known as the Big Bend, within the limits of Brewster county. In this bend is a huge area which has been marked off on the maps as Big Bend State Park. It is also a National Park Project, and may become an International Park if a joint agreement is worked out to extend its limits to include an equal area of Mexican territory.

The legend-filled Chisos Mountains dominate the Big Bend region. Many of the inhabitants are as weird and as fascinating as the stories they tell of what has happened, and what still happens in this country of stone-faced mountains and stone-faced people; a country of intense, closely-packed space, three-dimensional, unlike the familiar vast, open spaces; not free-stretching space, but space in saturated solution suspended in the mountain ranges, from the walls of the sierra: sounding boards against which a roaring silence strikes and rebounds in multiple overtones.

Space, and Time, too, are imprisoned here among the big stone piles, and they penetrate everything, move back and forth and around, like things which have no beginning and no end; completely unrelated to that Time which is marked off so smoothly on clocks and calendars; foreign to any kind

of Space that can be identified with yardsticks or milestones. Pines and oaks and juniper trees soften the glare of the hard-rock mountain sides and the passes. They complement the warm, encompassing glow of yellows and reds in the mineral-crammed stone, and repeat in another—heightened—key, the greens—silver-green and ash-green—of the cactus and the lechuguilla and chaparral shrubs below.

The Big Bend is but part of the huge slice of Texas west of the famous Pecos River, a mighty, jagged, rugged slice. In this trans-Pecos region, we find the highest point in Texas, the sky-scraping Guadalupe Peak, nearly nine thousand feet above sea level. It seems fitting, too, that in the Davis Mountains, just north of the Big Bend proper, the University of Texas and University of Chicago dedicated the second largest telescope in the world. The telescope has been installed in the McDonald Observatory, built for it, atop Mount Locke, sixty-eight hundred feet skyward in the Davis Mountains. The observatory is sixteen miles from the nearest village and forty-two miles from the nearest railroad. The powerful telescope might well be said to bring the observer closer to the heavens than he is to the inhabitants of the earth. The site was selected because tests showed that eighty out of a hundred nights here in this rainless region are clear, giving unmatched visibility. It also seems proper that one of the important tasks of the new observatory will be the investigation of the Mystery Stars, so-called "white dwarfs" quite different from the more familiar red stars. Mystery belongs out in this mountain country.

There are rich diggings here, too, for the archeologist, the anthropologist, the ethnologist, sociologist, not to mention the zoologist and botanist. At the Millington site near Presidio, scientists have been uncovering material on the life of the La Junta pit-dwellers who supposedly inhabited this region some five or six thousand years ago. The remains of

the Basket-Makers' culture are keeping scholars busy. Fossils have been found of dinosaurs, sea-urchins, oystershells measuring forty inches across the beam, and other extinct sea giants, indicating that all this land was at one time covered by the ocean. More than two hundred different varieties of birds and sixty different kinds of animals—badger, bobcat, peccary, coyote, beaver, bear, deer, fox—and an endless assortment of reptiles, are found out here.

At Santa Helena Canyon, beginning of the Big Bend, the Rio Grande rips through a gorge whose walls rise more than fifteen hundred feet straight up, like the walls of an elevator shaft. The wall to the north is in the United States and the wall bounding the canyon on the south is in Mexico. The cowhand who guides his pony along any of the trails in these mountains literally has, as the ballad of the Old Chisholm Trail says, "his saddle in the sky." If his horse should slip, the cowboy's troubles would be over. Any more punching of cattle for him would be—and the ballad says it again—"in the sweet bye and bye." For the inhabitants of the mountain region his would be another ghost to add to that grand legion of wraiths whose ectoplasm already fills hundreds of tales.

The Rio Grande shoots eastward again at the edge of Webster and Terrell and Val Verde counties. In Val Verde, the Rio Grande is met by the Pecos River that has come down from the New Mexico boundary, from Red Bluff Lake, through the cattle and sheep country, the great stretches of rolling hills and rising mountains and big plateaus: the country between Fort Stockton to the west and Midland, Big Spring, the edge of the South Plains to the north; San Angelo to the east and Del Rio to the south, Del Rio on the Rio Grande again.

Out here they refer to Fort Worth as being "back East." In Val Verde county, too, approached by the Rio Grande before it dips down toward Del Rio for a straight southeasterly

journey to the Gulf, is the far-famed town of Langtry. This place has been glorified by the legends that have clustered about the immortal Justice of the Peace Roy Bean, known throughout the land as "The Law West of the Pecos" and for his famous saloon named after the actress of that day, "The Jersey Lilly."

So celebrated has Judge Bean grown posthumously after making the fantastic history which became legend that the state legislature ordered his old building, combination saloon and courtroom, restored and preserved as a landmark. It will commemorate the early days when tough railroad workers and tough cowboys and tough outlaws drank and fought and were brought to the bar of Roy Bean's justice. You can still occasionally hear echoes of Roy Bean's "rulings" at trials in Texas courts, recalled by way of anecdote or by way of illustration of how the law should not be interpreted. Such a ruling for instance as the one in which Judge Bean absolved a friend on a charge of carrying a pistol. The Law West of the Pecos held that if a man is standing still he cannot be accused of carrying anything, a gun or anything else; but if he is moving, he must be regarded as traveling, and the law is very specific about the right of a traveler to carry a gun for his protection.

Judge Bean reputedly came from Kentucky and passed through Texas as a Forty-Niner en route to California. He returned to Texas and settled in San Antonio for a while, moving farther west to set up a saloon when the Southern Pacific began laying its tracks in that direction. His oasis became the most famous thirst-quenching spot in the arid region traversed by the railroad. Judge Bean's good business sense led him to take full advantage of his opportunities. He soon extended his monopoly to include the dispensing of justice in a land where there was no justice, no court anywhere between Del Rio and El Paso. Roy Bean got his ap-

pointment as Justice of the Peace, and soon the sign in front of the establishment read:

"Judge Roy Bean—Notary Public—Law West of the Pecos—Justice of the Peace—The Jersey Lilly—Ice Beer."

The classic of Roy Bean lore is the story of his inquest over the corpse of the Chinese who was slain in full view of everybody in the saloon. Judge Roy Bean thumbed the book of statutes—his only reference—but could find nothing in it that made it illegal to kill a Chinese. But since the Chinese was armed and had sixteen dollars and a half on his person, something had to be done about these details. He fined the corpse sixteen dollars and a half for carrying concealed weapons. Equally well known is the incident of the passenger on the train who made the mistake of trying to change a twenty-dollar bill with the purchase of a bottle of beer. The bartender had no change, but he allowed as how Judge Bean, then sitting on a beer keg holding court, might. The passenger, in a hurry to get back to the train, impatiently waved the bill at Bean and asked how about it.

"You've got your gall interrupting the court," The Law West of the Pecos thundered. "I fine you twenty dollars for contempt of court."

There are many stories about Judge Bean that cannot be told publicly for various and sundry reasons. Some of these stories are the debunking kind that nobody especially wants to hear anyhow, because they tend to make a mortal out of one who by general opinion is immortal. The Law West of the Pecos died suddenly and is buried in a graveyard at Del Rio. The marker is a slab that says, "Judge Roy Bean, Justice of the Peace, Law West of the Pecos."

Val Verde county, in which Roy Bean's Langtry flourished, is the sheep capital of the United States. There are more head of sheep in it than in any county anywhere in the United States. Wool is shipped from here by the millions of pounds,

and lambs travel away by the hundreds of thousands to become chops and stews. It is to be expected, then, that much of the lore here is about sheep and goats and lambs. The pastoral imagery finds its way into the language of the people, as it has in many poems and songs that have become classics in every tongue, carried on from the writings of the ancient bucolics, to the European shepherds, to the contemporary people of the pasture lands. The entire symbolism of the prevailing Occidental religion here recovers much of its original freshness. Words grown stale and flabby now seem to acquire new substance.

The teachings of gentleness and peace—so out of joint, apparently, with our times—the teachings that inspired the early Christians, come alive again in the daily rounds of the Mexican shepherd of Val Verde. When you stand on a green hillside and lull your nerves in the soothing hypnosis of an Arcadian-scene-in-Texas in the green valley below, it is not difficult to understand the sweet consolation of a faith that longed for the lion to lie down with the lamb. Not only the consolation, however, but the vital need, felt by those engaged in these civilizing pursuits, to convince the wild, nomadic, preying tribes that the highest good can come to humanity through the beating of swords into plowshares, the lances into shepherd's crooks.

The villain of the livestock country's stories is the animal or bird that preys on the flocks and herds. In the day and night struggles to protect the grazing animals, we find new meanings for many folk legends. We get an insight into the origins of literature and art and drama. A week-long duel against the coyote helps toward an understanding of these things. It becomes clear that the stories men tell, the songs they sing, the pictures they draw, the dreams they dream, are not things pumped into them. They emerge as much a part of a man's life as the legs he stands on, things that can be of

real help, if they are real, and not faked. They can help him do his work better, to find more joy in it, actually give him nourishment like bread and milk.

Perhaps, as you stand on the hillside, you may think of men who have it within their power to silence a people's songs, to bury their poems, to twist their stories and distort their dreams. You know, then, that when such a thing comes to pass; when the Wise Men and the Strong Men tremble at the songs the people sing, there is something wrong, something deeply wrong. You know that the people will sing and tell stories and dream and make themselves heard. The spirit of the Biblical prophets descends, you see, as you stand on a hill in a Texas Arcady.

But all soul-saddening thoughts vanish, lift into thin air—pulled away like a curtain of fog drawn up by the mid-morning sun—when you sit down to a session of yarns with a few sheepmen and Mr. Pineapple. The coyote and the wildcat, the rattlesnake, the fox, the 'possum, the jaguar, the bobcat, the skunk and coon and jackrabbit, take the stage, along with the ghosts of the countless buffalo that are the really vanished Americans. The buffalo's massive bones bleached on the desert and plains until a second wave of traders rolled over the state. These men gathered the bones to be taken back east for the manufacture of fertilizer. So the buffalo, in a way, goes on and on, maybe in the flowers in your garden.

There is spice, plenty of it, in some of the talk that comes out of the fifth or sixth bottle of beer. You begin hearing, for instance, about the Cowhand's Dilemma—whether to marry the girl, or to buy himself a calf. When the cowhand tells it, the protagonist is a shepherd and his problem is to choose between the girl and a sheep. It is as old as animal husbandry, and its metamorphoses are infinite. This type of lore continues in all its impure richness, changed with each telling, never caught in a net, never varnished, never pinned on a

cork display board. The one about the herder who was true to a sheep back in Montana is not so bad either, and you can sit up all night long listening to the adventures of the Mighty Bogo, whose secret of superhuman strength was in the sheepskin he wore as a garment.

He was Samson all over again, or Hercules, or a thousand other mighty folk heroes. Instead of the hair to tempt Delilah, however, there is the pure white wool of the sheepskin for coveting eyes. Marvelous feats are performed with its aid, several times it is lost, it is recovered, and the day is saved. The coat gets lost in some mighty strange places, too, as in an airplane, or the laboratory of a scientist, or up in the North Woods.

Bogo put on his coat and started to lift the sunken submarine *Squalus* off the bottom of the sea. The submarine slipped when it nearly got to the top. The story behind that is the feud between Bogo and the Sea Monster, who attacked him in the water. His coat slipped off for a moment, and with it went his strength and he dropped the submarine. When last heard of he had recovered the coat and was chasing the monster to its lair in some underwater cavern. In other submarine caverns, cowboys whose hair is seaweed ride big sea-horses over the underwater ranges.

Strange things are happening in Folkloreland on account of radio and movies. Al Capone and Legs Diamond and Baby Face are getting all mixed up with Sam Bass and Wild Bill Hickok and John Wesley Hardin and Jesse James. I heard a description of a border badman who was more like a cross between Wallace Beery and Edward G. Robinson than anything else you might think of. The newsreels of floods on the Mississippi are also adding a wealth of detail to stories of legendary floods on the Rio Grande.

Daring rescues are related, made in outboard motor boats, equipped with shortwave radios, the likes of which have never

cut the murky waters of the Rio Grande. The Lone Ranger has undergone numerous reincarnations among the yarn-spinners of ranch-house porches. It might surprise some people, but not me anymore, to learn that men from Mars landed on the plains back in '74 when the old trail driver and his herd were attacked by Indians. Any day now it may be revealed that Donald Duck rode the Pony Express, and that Mickey Mouse was the hero who polished off the Evil Men trying to keep the Union Pacific from stringing its tracks across the desert.

My friend, the Judge, was a pretty good lawyer in his day, but his fame rested less on his legal prowess than on his superb talent as a storyteller. He won case after case solely on his ability to relate anecdotes to the jury. There was usually a point remotely related to the trial, and the stories certainly had their effect on the deliberations. In one case, he merely told the jury a half-dozen anecdotes, without any further argument. Making no attempt to connect the stories with the case, he just wound up with the statement, "I hope you will find my client innocent." He counted entirely on the relaxing effect of the stories to put the jurors in a mood to judge the defendant less harshly.

More recently the Judge created a character, a local character based on a man who once actually existed, a town loafer to whom many strange things happened in storyland. Now most of his stories are about this character, whom he calls Joe Baboso. During the last few years, however, the Judge's friends have begun detecting, among Joe Baboso's adventures, one thing after another that they recognized as part of a recent movie in town, or connected with some event featured in a newspaper, or stemming with little alteration from a radio serial.

In the same manner, Old-Timers refurbish their past with adventures from the wild west movies. Maybe it is a kind of

law of literary compensation, for the radios and movies and comic strips have raided all the known folk stories and legends. Now retribution has set in, and the folk-tale tellers are depredating in the stockades of professional entertainment.

The influence of commercial entertainment on folk material and folkways is evident in other forms too. For instance rural folk used to make flowerpots of hollowed tree trunks and such. Later they almost universally turned to tin cans; and now their showpieces are handsome flowerboxes made from abandoned gasoline tanks off automobiles. There is poetry in the exquisite utilization of a sawed-off gas tank, lacquered in green or red or yellow, when you see the first one, or the second. After a dozen of them, you begin to wonder, and soon you trace this bit of popular art back to a familiar diagram. Not so long ago, you find, it appeared in a pulp magazine which gives most of its space to telling how to make useful knick-knacks around the house during your leisure time between relief checks.

In religion as in folklore, the airplane, radio, movie have become invaders. People believe in God. But they no longer believe in the Devil, no matter how he is dressed up, no matter under what doctrinaire cloak he is whipped. They look upon the Devil as a very comic figure with horns and a pointed tail, and no sermon can erase this picture. The Mexican farmer who used to place a picture of the Virgin in the mesquite tree, pray for rain, and then whip the picture if she didn't produce—what about him? There he is over yonder, sitting at the radio, praying, not with his tongue but with his ears. What the weather bureau and the market reports say are much more real to him now than the Virgin. In some instances, however, the Virgin and the weather bureau and the market reports are all working together in the poor farmer's mind. Somehow, the voices that come out of the

little box are regarded with as much awe as a miraculous apparition. God is praised for these blessings, and not the mortal men who may have discovered or invented or perfected them.

Back to earth again in Del Rio, you find that you have approached what is, strictly speaking, South Texas, the particular orbit of San Antonio, especially old San Antonio. Almost due east, halfway between Del Rio and San Antonio is the town of Uvalde, the seat of Uvalde county, a livestock and farming region. It is a kind of borderline between the more agricultural zone, the Winter Garden section south of San Antonio, and the range lands to the west. Uvalde combines the two.

From Uvalde, west to Bracketville and south through Maverick county, then to Eagle Pass, again on the Rio Grande, Eagle Pass is just a short drop from Del Rio. It is the commercial center for much of what is known as the Winter Garden, an irrigated vegetable farm section that includes such places as Carrizo Springs and Crystal City, through which we pass on our way to Laredo.

The city of Laredo is the metropolis of the Lower Rio Grande, as El Paso is the metropolis of the Upper Rio Grande. Laredo is, next to El Paso, the biggest Texas town on the border. Furthermore, Laredo is the oldest town on the north bank of the lower reaches of the Rio Grande. The community was founded with fifteen families in 1755 or thereabouts, by Tomas Sanchez de la Barrera y Gallardo, for whom it served as a base for ranching operations. It held township status at the time Texas officially became a part of the United States.

Laredo is listed as the oldest independent city of Texas. In October, 1938, a monument was erected to the memory of Don Tomas, one of the few monuments in Texas to men with Spanish names. With its population predominantly

Mexican in origin (referred to in the public prints as Spanish-American, Latin-American, Texas-Mexican, Mexico-Texano) Laredo is typical of the South Texas region of which it is the metropolis. The discovery of oil and comparatively recent drilling have begun to change the picture somewhat in this formerly exclusive farm and ranch area, but the old cowboy spirit is still there.

*As I walked out in the streets of Laredo,  
As I walked out in Laredo one day,  
I spied a poor cowboy wrapped up in white linen  
Wrapped up in white linen as cold as the clay.  
Oh, beat the drum slowly and play the fife lowly,  
Play the Dead March as you carry me along,  
Take me to the green valley, there lay the sod o'er me,  
For I'm a young-cowboy, and I know I've done  
wrong.*

*I see by your outfit that you are a cowboy,  
These words he did say as I boldly stepped by.  
Come sit down beside me and hear my sad story.  
I was shot in the breast and I know I must die.  
Let sixteen gamblers come handle my coffin,  
Let sixteen cowboys come sing me a song.  
Take me to the graveyard and lay the sod o'er me,  
For I'm a poor cowboy and I know I done wrong.*

*It was once in the saddle I used to go dashing,  
It was once in the saddle I used to be gay.  
First to the dramhouse and then to the cardhouse,  
Got shot in the breast, I am dying today.  
Go gather around you a crowd of young cowboys  
And tell them the story of this, my sad fate.  
Tell one and the other before they go further,  
To stop their wild roving before 'tis too late.  
Go fetch me a cup, a cup of cold water,  
To cool my parched lips, the poor cowboy said.*

*Before I returned, the spirit had left him  
And gone to its Maker, the cowboy was dead.  
We beat the drum slowly and played the fife lowly,  
And bitterly wept as we bore him along.  
For we all loved our comrade, so brave, young and  
handsome,  
We all loved our comrade, although he'd done  
wrong.*

A number of South Texas counties are known for the large percentage of population of Mexican origin; for powerful political rings, often controlled by one family in a county; and for the prevalence of the Spanish language, superseding English in many cases. Most of these counties are thinly populated, the residents scattered in various ranches, and it is next to impossible to tell just who belongs where when voting time comes. You have such characters as the "Duke of Duval," and such descriptions of a county as the "Free State of —." Counties like Zapata, Webb, Starr, Duval, have recorded solid votes for the candidate favored by the controlling group, without a single dissenting ballot. In one election, Starr county went solid for one candidate in the primary, and then solid against the same candidate in the second primary. Some of the European dictators might learn a thing or two about plebiscites from the bosses of some of our Texas county rings.

Fully as interesting as the politics of this region is the fascinating jargon known as Tex-Mex, which is neither Spanish nor English. It contains many weird distortions and metamorphoses which would never be recognized unless you had a working knowledge of both languages. For instance, a truck becomes a "troca." In Mexico City they would not know what you were talking about, because the correct Spanish word is not at all similar, *camion*. A ten-cent piece which we

call a dime, is to many a Tex-Mex something pronounced "dye-me," which you understand if you talk English, but is Greek to you if you know only Spanish. A sandwich, or a related structure on a bun or roll, that is, something inside of bread of one kind or another, is known as a "lonche" along the border, deriving from "lunch." In the interior of Mexico the same article is called a *torta*.

More recently, however, both in Texas and in Mexico, the composition which we know as a sandwich has gradually assumed its American name or an approximation of it. You can call for a "sahn-wees" from San Antonio south to Guatemala and you will be understood. The "Anglo"-American—that is, somebody named Jones instead of Garza—has also enriched the English language by addition of Spanish words or Anglicized Spanish. Conversation bristles with them, interpolated in English sentences, sometimes Spanish words, sometimes Mexicanisms, sometimes plain Tex-Mex jargon.

Some kind of height in linguistic achievement was reached by a Mexican painter who once walked into the Judge's office and said he wanted to sue. Very excitedly, he plunged into his story, talking in Texas-Spanish. Several times the Judge tried to stop him for interpretations, especially of a phrase that occurred repeatedly in the heated narrative. This phrase was *tres colas afuera*. Each of these words is perfectly good Spanish. *Tres* means three. *Colas* is tails. *Afuera* means outside. But . . . "Three Tails Outside?" Only Mr. Pineapple could match this gem. It finally became clear to the lawyer, when the painter wound up with an announcement that he wanted to sue the telephone company for cutting off his service without notice. The *colas* which is a literal translation of "tails" was now perfectly plain as Tex-Mex for "calls" and *afuera* was intelligible as referring to outside calls, that is, long-distance. It seems that the trouble was about

three long-distance calls that appeared on his bill, and the subsequent cutting off of service when he refused to pay.

The old ranch picture is changing in this region, principally because of the discovery of oil. It used to be a common story that if you had any business to transact in the courthouse of some of the South Texas county seats, it would be impossible unless you took an interpreter. But lease-hounds and landholders, tool-dressers and grease-monkeys, have been filing into the region with the oil booms. They have brought about Anglicization of the language spoken in the stores, restaurants and public gathering places. There was a time when only Spanish was heard. Now you can hear plenty of English.

Something of this spreading domination of English over Spanish, a triumphal note, appeared unofficially in the celebration of the Texas Centennial in 1936. That centennial marked a commemoration of independence, of release from the domination of Mexico. Now, border Texans are talking of a bi-centennial. Giant strides over time, worthy of a giant in space like Texas, may lead Texans to the celebration of a bi-centennial only a decade after celebrating a centennial. Perhaps not all of Texas will celebrate, but at least a good-size chunk of it may, along the Mexican border, from Laredo on down to the mouth of the Rio Grande. This stretch includes an irrigated farm and orchard section of comparatively recent development, known as the Lower Rio Grande Valley, as distinguished from the Upper Rio Grande Valley around El Paso.

The bi-centennial would go back beyond the Stars and Stripes, beyond the Lone Star flag of Texas, past the tricolor of Mexico, back to the era of European domination, to the days when the first colony was established by Spaniards on the banks of the Rio Grande. It would be a recognition of the part played by the Spanish explorers in founding the early settlements.

Between the date to which the bi-centennial traces, and that from which the recent centennial sprang, Spanish-America and British-America met. Each marked off the limits of the other's penetration at the Rio Grande, where a change in language and a change in customs now take place automatically as you cross the river. Until a quarter of a century ago, there had been comparatively little change along this Rio Grande country. Then came the railroads, colonization from the Dakotas and Nebraska and Indiana and Minnesota; from the Deep South; from other parts of Texas. The homeseekers arrived, to establish themselves side by side with the old-timers of the border and with the even older population of predominantly Mexican origin.

Of all the border country, the Lower Rio Grande Valley probably comes closest to providing a condensed version of a process typical of Texas, leaving out only the citrus fruit:

*An early frontier town as a basis—plus homeseekers—inflation of land values—miniature Florida and California booms—return to normal land values—conversion of dry arid land into rich irrigated grapefruit and orange groves, cotton fields and vegetable farms.*

Here, all the earlier types are found—the man of the Old West; the man of the Old South; the man from Mexico who fled for political or other reasons; the old trail driver; the frontier trader or perhaps perfectly honorable smuggler; the boomer who came with the railroads; the seaman who followed the Gulf Coast down to the new ports of Isabel and Brownsville; the twentieth-century homeseeker from the Middle West and the North. They have been fused into this region known as the Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas.

Sometimes, perhaps as it should be, this region has been called the Magic Valley.



# VII

## MAGIC VALLEY

GHOSTS, suitably enough, haunt the Magic Valley:

Ghosts of the Spanish Conquest, in frilled collars and puffed sleeves, swinging sabers, like the Three Musketeers.

Ghosts in priests' cassocks, wraiths of the Old Padres who helped tame the Red Man so the White Man could take possession of his land and soul.

Ghosts of Spanish- and Anglo-American settlers whose adventurous souls were divorced prematurely from their flesh. They had gone forth to colonize the frontier before their central governments were ready to provide proper protection. These are scalpless ghosts.

Ghosts of Mexican revolutionaries and outlaws, whose puffed purple bodies floated down the Rio Grande on rafts of debris, followed by snapping alligator gars.

Ghosts of American badmen of the Six-Gun days, some of them called "peace officers," others gamblers and dandies, sports and panders, who followed in the wake of wars and colonization.

Ghosts of Forty-Niners who started westward by the water route, up the Rio Grande, and decided to camp in this virgin country, to camp permanently.

Ghosts of Confederate and Union soldiers who fought for a cause and for precious cotton that was being exchanged for

war supplies at the only unblockaded ports during the Civil War.

Ghosts of Maximilian's and Juarez' soldiers, Austrian and French, Mexicans and Americans, who did their fighting south of the Rio Grande.

Fresher ghosts, of Americans and Mexicans who fell during the raids and skirmishes and riots and lynchings of "border trouble" days, after the fall of Diaz, the days of watchful waiting.

Ghosts of small farmers and ranchers who were sucked into the confines of ranch-kingdoms as into a miasma of quicksand, never to be heard of again except in the annals of unsolved mysteries.

And very modern ghosts of victims who fell in feuds of passion, in drinking brawls, in murders for insurance, and as victims of collisions and hit-and-run drivers along a network of up-to-date highways. These are ghosts of a mechanized, prosperous America.

By far the most persistent of these spirits are the hardy souls of those who managed to acquire immense grants of land from the Spanish king more than two centuries ago. They live in the courthouses where the real-estate deeds and abstracts of title are filed away on the immense pages of bulky volumes that look like Doomsday Books. Since oil came to the Magic Valley, these ghosts have been having a busy time of it, rushing from lawyers' offices to surveyors' camps, to lease agencies. They clutter up the humble shacks of countless descendants who for years looked upon their heritage of microscopic bits of land as practically worthless, so worthless that they did not even bother to pay taxes in many cases. But they learned that land has depth as well as breadth. Now the ghosts of the original grantees have been invoked to work overtime and even on Sundays and holidays.

I learned about them as I toured the Lower Rio Grande

Valley. The Judge and Mr. Pineapple were along, too, the latter not only as good traveling company, but also as guide through the uncharted land of Black Magic and White Magic, the sorcery and witchcraft that pervade the less beaten paths of the borderland, like an invisible kingdom. Only in a region so thickly populated with ghosts could the art of the medieval witch-doctor and miracle healer hang on with such tenacity.

Before going up the paved highway from Brownsville to San Benito, we turned off the main road toward a very curious place known as Snakeville.

A blessed event had just occurred in the love-nest of a Mexican boa constrictor when we arrived. Mama boa, some ten feet long, had given birth to twenty-four baby boas, each a foot or more in length, and they were squirming and twisting all over one another like a lot of happy young kittens. Our entrance into Snakeville was heralded by the roar of lions, the screeching of parakeets, the barking of dogs and the howl of coyotes, screaming monkeys, wailing wildcats and a medley of other sounds that issued from the rows of cages and coops along the fence. It was feeding time in Snakeville. The motif of this clamorous outburst, like some weird overtones from an impossible jungle, was a familiar one: Hunger, the real call of the wild.

An owl hooted, and Angel said sure it was going to rain. It's an old Indian sign. The birds know and the animals know. The Indians learned from the creatures of the forest and field. The border folk learned from the Indians. When a frog keeps croaking without stopping, you know he is dying for fresh water. Just as when the earthworm crawls out and the quail whistles. But fishermen and ranchmen know their rain best and they usually gauge it by the wind. I recalled a story of drought time in Texas. The preacher called a meeting to pray for rain after folks had become desperate.

Old Rancher Rawhide listened a while and then said maybe it's all right if you-all wanna go ahead and pray, and sure it can't do no harm, but it sure ain't gonna do you a bit of good onless the wind's outa the east.

That reminded the Judge, so he told us about the time Joe Baboso was making his great drive of cattle back in Eighty-four. By that time, they were no longer driving cattle overland, but had invented a pipeline that ran directly from the range to the stockyards up north. Well, there the steers were, racing through the pipeline, when an old North Texas woodpecker started drilling a hole in the pipeline. Them woodpeckers never did have no sense, didn't know their appetite from a hole in the ground. That bird made a big leak in the pipeline. Forty-five carloads of cattle were lost before the leak could be plugged.

"But how did they plug the leak?" Mr. Pineapple asked innocently.

The Judge roared out a belly laugh.

"Why, you old croonin' numbskull," he stage-whispered, "what do you think they would plug it with? What else was there, but a lot of bull, just like what you're getting now. Haw! Haw!"

When you mentioned bulls around Mr. Pineapple, you were likely to get him started either on stories of spectacular events at bullfights back in Mexico, or on an endless saga of the tremendous doings of an old-time Texan. This Old-Timer became famous as Strap Buckner, "Champion of the World," who knocked every man down, and whose greatest battle—the greatest battle of all time—was his fight with the monstrous black bull named Noche. Some people said Noche was really the Devil himself in disguise.

Strap Buckner knocked men down without malice. He did it just for the pleasure of knocking them down and for the pleasure of picking them up again. Whence he came and

whither he went nobody seems to know for sure. There was a pioneer named Buckner in the first colony of three hundred settlers headed by Stephen F. Austin. It is recorded that this Buckner gave Austin some argument about the way Austin was running things. It is probable that this argument was expanded into a knock-down-drag-out fight, in which Strap floored Steve and then took on the rest of the colony one at a time. He would line up a row of a dozen or more and knock them down with one blow. After he knocked Noche back to Hell, Strap wandered all over Texas land, engaging other monsters, both human and animal, and he may still be at it.

We walked along the Snakeville cages watching the animals eat. As we stopped in front of the coyotes, Mr. Pineapple was off on a spinner again, inspired by this animal, an abridged version of the wolf. Everybody likes to tell stories about the coyote, and the little devil has become one of the leading protagonists of Texas lore. He's really an accomplished actor, according to the stories, and can change character to suit the story. Nothing uniform or stylized about him. Sometimes he is a hero, and as often he might be a villain. In most of the fables, the coyote is pictured as being very stupid and quite a coward. However, in the stories told as true accounts of recent occurrences, the coyote frequently appears as very shrewd, even rivaling the fox for cunning, and quite a brave fellow when he feels he's got a fighting chance.

Very many books could be filled, Mr. Pineapple pointed out, with the stories about the adventures of the 'possum and the coyote. Once the 'possum discovered the coyote almost on him. There was not time to escape. The 'possum had to think fast. He flopped over on his back, and propped his hind legs up against a big boulder.

The coyote's curiosity was greater than his hunger.

"What are you doing in that position?" he asked.

"The sky is about to fall and crush the earth and I am

holding it up, you see," the 'possum answered. "But I am getting pretty tired. If I let go, we shall all be lost. I wish I knew of someone who would take my place here while I go and find a stick to prop up the sky."

"I'll do it, but don't stay away too long," the coyote said, and he changed places with the 'possum.

The 'possum never came back. The next time they met, the coyote was determined to get revenge and the 'possum played another trick on him, and so on and on and on.

Coyotes eat sheep and calves, usually take bites out of their hindquarters, and very rarely attack bigger cattle. If the ranges are built right, with good fences, the coyote can't get in at all. There is a school of thought among ranchmen and especially among farmers that believes the coyote does more good than harm. He eats a lot of the rodents and other small pests that devour field crops or get into storage bins where grains and other foodstuffs are kept. With a good active coyote around the neighborhood, these parasites vanish very rapidly. The coyote, unless he has rabies or distemper or something along these lines will not attack a human being.

While Mr. Pineapple kept me entertained with stories about the coyote, the Judge and an attendant of the Snakeville menagerie were at the other end of the enclosure very busy discussing something. As we drew closer, we heard the attendant telling the Judge about snakes.

"There are stories about the 'glass snake' which is really no snake at all, but a kind of lizard," the attendant said. "The stories tell how the snake will break into pieces when touched, and then all the pieces come together again. The lizard known as the glass snake does seem to have a vulnerable spot on his tail. It has developed the power of shedding that vulnerable spot when hurt, so that it does not harm the rest of him, and soon the missing piece grows out again. There are stories of the whip snake, that will chase a man for miles until

the man falls exhausted. Then the snake is converted into a huge whip wielded by itself and it flogs the victim into unconsciousness before it sets about making a meal of him."

Everybody is familiar with "milking" snakes that lurk in the barnyard and before dawn crawl toward the cows and attach themselves to a teat, proceeding to drain the dugs dry. Sometimes the snakes come out in teams and seize all the teats, so that the net result is like attaching a milking machine. Then we have the hoop snake, which puts its tail in its mouth, forms a hoop, rolls down hill and across dale.

The Judge popped up at this point to get an expert opinion on the question of the ancient feud between the chaparral-cock, or roadrunner, and the rattlesnake.

"The way I get it," the Judge said, "there seems to be a lot of eating one way and just a little the other. In fact, one of the favorite foods of the chaparral-cock is a young rattlesnake, preferably one fed on a diet of bugs. But once the young rattlesnakes are born they are strictly on their own and the big mama rattler does not come to their defense. But, occasionally, and in desert country only, where there are no trees, the mother chaparral may have some trouble fighting a rattlesnake away from her babies, which make pretty good eating until their bills are too long and hard.

"Out in the desert, the roadrunner will use cactus in building its nest on the ground, and this has given rise to the story that the bird will surround a rattler with cactus, hem the reptile in until it perishes in anguish. It's a good story, too, whether true or not."

After our little excursion into the reptile world, all very enlightening, we piled into the car and headed toward San Benito. The transition from winter to spring in this region is hardly noticeable in so far as temperature is concerned. The winter is relatively mild and sunny, as many trailer tourists and "snowdiggers" from the northern states have discovered.

Out of Brownsville we passed a *resaca*—an old bed of the Rio Grande now become an independent lagoon—full of water hyacinth, almost completely covering the surface with its broad green leaves and its flowers that ran the whole scale of blues. Mesquite trees were beginning to bloom, as were their first cousins, the fragrant *retamas*. The *retama* is sometimes known as the shower of gold, Jerusalem thorn, or as burning bush.

To the more practical minded, the *retama* is known by the prosaic label of horsebean. Its fruit consists of pods which contain large edible beans, cooked whole or ground up for flour by folk whose taste or pocketbook leans in that direction. Horses and other stock are fond of these beans as well as of the mesquite beans, also eaten by many human beings. Nearly every kid in Texas has chewed mesquite beans at one time or another. Branches and leaves of both trees—and this is true of most of their relatives, including the ebony—are used in native herb cures, as teas, and for poultices.

One bank of the *resaca* was lined with cat-tails. It looked like an overhead view of guns carried by a battalion of wooden soldiers. As we passed over the bridge, a flock of birds swooped down into the cat-tails. A chorus of frogs reminded me of the noise made somewhere inside an automobile when the gears fail to mesh properly.

Everywhere the first signs of spring were in evidence. One sure sign, according to residents here, is the blooming of the Spanish dagger. All the Spanish daggers in the region are supposed to bloom simultaneously as if operated by the same mysterious controls somewhere. One afternoon they are just jagged bushes, with the bayonet-like leaves bunched below a slender green stalk that shoots upward five or six feet. Next morning a luscious cluster of waxy white flowers, a cluster almost as big as the bush itself, towers over the brush around it, arrogantly, like a strutting drum major.

Along the barbed wire fences the first primroses, white and yellow cups, and scatterings of varicolored stars looked like elaborate military decorations, with a lot of points. As we rounded a bend we came onto a slight incline that was ablaze with red and yellow, a floral carpet that was self-identifying. If nobody had ever told you, you would have named them without a moment's hesitation, exactly what everybody calls these flowers—Indian blanket.

This happens to be one of the folklore flowers, and was supposed to have been first created when a lost little Indian girl fell asleep in a field. She made a wish to the Great Spirit, because she was cold, asking only that he might provide a covering for her—like that of her father's blanket which she had been weaving before she wandered away. When she awoke in the morning, there it was, the blanket in all its glory.

The legend of the bluebonnet, the official Texas state flower, is also derived from a little Indian girl's experiences with the Great Spirit. It seems that a great drought had descended on the tribe, just when rain was needed more than anything else. There was only one way to interpret that. The Great Spirit was angry with the tribe for some reason or other. The little girl heard the Wise Men talking about it. She heard them say they would prepare a great sacrifice, something that was dear to them, and perhaps thereby appease the Great Spirit.

That night, the little girl looked among her possessions for something she loved dearly. It did not take her long to find it, because she did not have many possessions. But of the few, her favorite was the little rag doll with a blue hood and cape. She went out to the field and there she tore her doll to shreds and then buried it. Next morning a heavy rain came, and when the water stopped falling and the sun came out, the field where the girl had buried her doll was covered with blue

flowers. The Wise Men understood then that the Great Spirit had made those flowers to let them know that he had answered the prayer of the little girl.

As we rode along the highway toward San Benito, the perfume of the *huisache* tree blossoms floated across the highway. The idea of ghosts haunting the old records in the courthouse and stalking through the lawyers' offices had appealed to the Judge.

"I think I can name all those ghosts for you," he began. "And don't think they just limit their operations to this region. They have been up to Austin, to the state Supreme Court, and even farther—right on up to Washington, to the federal Supreme Court. No little lawsuit is going to feaze the spirit of the old Spanish dons.

"The first Spaniards who came to the Rio Grande were not interested in land much, though, nor were they, as is often supposed, greatly concerned about finding gold. They had run into something which could be just as precious as the yellow metal, a very common household article, gentlemen of the jury, known to the chemist as sodium chloride and to the lady of the house, God bless her, as salt. North of Reynosa the Spaniards found huge saline deposits which came to be called Sal de Rey, a literal translation of which is the King's Salt. I know a story for people who laugh at the idea of the importance of salt. Like so many other common things, we don't realize how valuable it can be until one fine day we are forced to do without it.

"Once upon a time there was a king who had several daughters. One of them offended him when she suggested that salt for his table was among the most precious things that a faithful daughter could provide for her royal dad. The other two sisters gave fancy suggestions, all of which pleased the old buzzard, tickling his kingly vanity. He heaped scorn on the one who offered anything so lowly as common salt. But

the heroine was finally vindicated when somebody arranged to serve a platter of meat without a speck of salt on it.

"He fumed and he roared and he raved because there was no salt, and heaped maledictions on the head of the fool who thought that meat was worth eating without it. When they finally brought him the salt and he had filled the royal belly, he came to his senses. He realized how precious salt was. All was forgiven, and the gal was reinstated, and it seems that something very unusual happened to her soon afterward, something rarely known to happen in fairy tales. She married a very handsome prince, and, of all things, she managed to live happily ever afterward, just like in the movies."

It turned out, during the course of the Judge's monologue, that among the first persons to acquire some of the big slices of land dished out by the Spanish king was Señora Rosa Maria Hinojosa de Balli, whose husband, Jose Maria de Balli, and father, Juan Jose Hinojosa, were original grantees. Señora Balli died about 1800, and left her accumulated wealth to her three sons: Nicolas, a priest, who inherited the penchant for collecting real estate, greatly increasing his heritage later; Juan Jose, an officer in the army, and Jose Maria Jr. Nicolas, the priest, was the Balli heir who got a grant to the coastal island known as Padre. Oil has been discovered on Padre Island and many heirs appeared.

The whole thing has made the lawyers very happy, but also pretty dizzy, because they find themselves having to cite Spanish law to uphold English law, and vice versa. On the one hand they are forced to defend that ogre, Expropriation—way back in 1826, and even earlier—and on the other hand, condemn it, according to which side of what suit they happen to be championing.

Murders, holdups, robberies, duels, raids, abductions punctuate the history of borderland titles, probably the most complicated legal maze in America. Even the well-known

Philadelphia lawyer meets his match when he runs into a frontier attorney whose wits have been sharpened in a Texas land suit. The tricky Rio Grande has complicated matters still more by shifting its course now and then, leaving United States land to the south, and Mexican farm lands to the north of the stream. This phase of the muddle has been pretty well cleared up through treaties between the two countries.

We were now passing through San Benito. We crossed the big *resaca*, lined with tall palm trees, that cuts through the town. Across the tracks we rode, into "Mexican Town," the section of huts and shacks. There is a "Mexican Town" in nearly every South Texas community, as well as in some of the larger cities to the north.

After we crossed the Arroyo Colorado bridge, we turned off into the brush and drove about eight miles through woodland, covered with a heavy growth of mesquite. We reached a small clearing at the far end of a little cornfield. There stood an adobe hut, almost completely hidden by a barricade of boxes, cans and pots of flowers, vines and fern. We drove around to the side of the hut, under the shade of two big trees, one a *retama* and the other a chinaberry. We had arrived at the home, the laboratory, the prayer and incantation quarters, of Don Mariano Trequemilo, the *curandero*, the healer. He was known to some simply as a dealer in herbs, to others as one with a great knowledge of medicinal plants, and to a smaller circle as a witch-doctor. His lore and methods combined that of the ancient Mexican Indians and that of the Voodoo priests of the African jungle cult. As we came up, the whitewashed wooden door of the adobe hut swung open.

When we reached the door we were facing a rather short man, framed in the doorway. He was wearing *huarache* sandals on bare, mahogany-colored feet; blue jeans over bent, swaying legs; white shirt, not tucked in, but the tails brought around the outside of the belt loops like a blouse, shining

with the snowy cleanliness of freshly washed linen. The left hand rested on a gnarled staff, almost the same color as the skin, and almost the same texture. Curved over the ball top, the hand seemed to be an extension of the stick. Both stick and hand looked as if they were growing right out of the earthen floor of the hut.

His right hand held a corncob pipe, with a long reed stem. From the open collar of the shirt, the neck and head rose to independence. Once you had quickly seen the rest of him, your attention was forcibly fixed on his face. Only a bit of the wrinkled neck was visible through the straggly gray whiskers covering his cheeks and chin. The whiskers blended over his ears with long gray hair draped over his head like a wig of moss.

For a moment we were not aware of a man, but rather a strange apparition. His head was bent forward slightly. He raised it upward a little and he came to life with a gradual glow, much as an electric heating coil when the current is turned on. What glowed were his deep-set eyes. They grew brighter and brighter. Against the dark doorway, against his deep brown skin and the gray strands of hair, his eyes came forward like coals that rise up through a bed of settling ashes. With such eyes, now focused in a burning gaze on his visitors, no wonder the man could become a witch.

Mr. Pineapple had told us, on the way over, something about this *curandero* who had become famous up and down the Rio Grande. Don Mariano was reputedly one hundred and eighteen years old. He was a native of Veracruz, on the Gulf Coast of Mexico, along a stretch to which the Spaniards had taken many Negroes. Don Mariano himself, like many of the people of Veracruz, was a mixed-blood, a mulatto of Mexico. His father was a Negro, worker in the cane fields, who had been brought over to the tropical jungles when they were cleared for sugar cane. His mother was a full-blooded Indian,

not the *mestizo*—the mixture of Spanish and Indian which is most common in Mexico—but a pure-blooded Indian. In Don Mariano, the two types had blended almost evenly, so that when you looked at him one moment he seemed to be a Negro, and then the next an Indian chief. When the two qualities did not separate, they were fused into a kind of savage nobility, a combination of pride and humility and physical self-possession.

We figured back along his hundred and eighteen years. That would take his birth to the year 1822. Mexico had finally won her independence then. Abe Lincoln was thirteen years old. The boy Mariano witnessed the rise and fall of Santa Anna, the war when Texas won her independence. By 1847, when American troops had planted the Stars and Stripes atop Chapultepec Castle, he was a soldier in the Mexican army. Twenty years later he was in the army again, fighting with Juarez against Maximilian. There was a story that he had been in the firing squad that executed Maximilian. Mr. Pineapple said that Don Mariano had witnessed the execution but had not taken part in it. Soon after that, he migrated northward, crossed the Rio Grande, and settled along the Arroyo Colorado.

He has been there since, watching the country grow from a wilderness to a busy farming region, with railroads and automobiles and airplanes. He seldom left his hut. The longest trip he made was in 1936 when one of his clients, a chauffeur, took him to Brownsville for the inauguration of the deepwater port there. He drove out across the flat prairies below Brownsville and watched the ships glide down the channel. From a distance the channel itself was not visible, nor, of course, any water. The ships seemed to be moving along the prairie, right over the land, a miraculous sight which was just the sort of thing that would still thrill Don Mariano Trequemilo's aged bones.

Don Mariano looked at us a moment, recognized Mr. Pineapple, who then spoke to him. The *curandero* stepped back, opened the door wide, and motioned to us to step inside. He did not say a word. It was midafternoon outside, in the glare of a springtime sun. We walked right into midnight.

The interior of the hut was pitch dark, with the exception of one corner where a squat, thick candle burned. But it had been shaded so that its light was confined to a very small area. After a few moments, the black inside turned to a dull gray and we could begin to distinguish some of the objects here and there. At first they all looked like draped forms gradually emerging from a fog. In the center of the room was a large round table. Don Mariano took the candle from the corner and placed it on the table. Then he sat down and motioned to us to bring chairs. We sat down at the table, facing him, the candle between us and him. He spoke:

"Tell me, Don Chucho, in what may I be of service to you and your friends?"

Mr. Pineapple tried to explain to him that one of us had some very serious problems that needed solving. Therefore they had come to consult Don Mariano, whose wisdom and whose power is known far and wide.

"But, my friend," the *curandero* answered, in Spanish, "you do not have to deceive me. It is true that one of you has serious problems. It is true that all of you have. But that is not why you came here. When one is in difficulties, Don Chucho, one comes alone, and does not bring others to hear the troubles. This is a visit of curiosity, but it is just as well. It does not make a bit of difference to me, for I have nothing to conceal. You know of Niño Fidencio, the Healer-Boy of Mexico, who works entirely in the open, outside, in the field, in a hammock. What Niño Fidencio knows, he learned from me. Ask your friends, please, to lay the left hand on the table, palm upward, and I shall select one. If that person does not

object, the others can remain present during the consultation."

We laid our hands on the table, and Don Mariano looked at each in turn, carefully, without touching any of them. Then he picked up the Judge's hand and slipped his under it, both palms upward. We all fixed our attention on the two hands that remained on the table: Don Mariano's a deep, deep brown, the Judge's red and whitish.

"First," Don Mariano said, "we must look for the crosses in your hand." As far as he was concerned now, the rest of us had faded away. While we sat there, I became aware of a faint aroma of incense, the smoke from *copal*; not rising then, but as if much of it had been burned in the room and had penetrated to every part of it.

Don Mariano now reached into a glass bowl, the kind that ordinarily makes a home for goldfish, and from it withdrew some large heart-shaped leaves that had been soaking in—we learned later—an infusion of alcohol with anise seed and garlic. He stroked the Judge's hand with the wet leaves and then rubbed the palm and the back of his hand and wrist. When the palm had dried, Don Mariano reached toward the other side of the table into an earthenware bowl piled high with kernels of dry corn. He placed a kernel at the base of each finger. With five more kernels he made a little cross in the hollow of the palm, about the geographical center of the hand. Next, he brought into the light what looked like a little bracelet, brilliant red beans on a piece of fiber string. This he looped over the Judge's thumb, so that a row of beans made a scarlet arc around the mound from the thumb-edge to the wrist.

The witch-doctor moistened a square piece of blue cloth, about the size and shape of a pocket handkerchief, then let drops of water fall from it gently into the Judge's palm, on the kernels of corn and on the red beans. He told us later

that when this happened he felt a tingle, like a mild electric shock, travel up his arm and discharge itself at the base of his skull.

The water made the kernels move. Those from the fingers slid down toward the middle of the palm. Those in the hollow spread out into an irregular, loosely-formed star. The beans drew up tightly, the arc contracting into an almost straight line. The palm now looked like a moonlit lagoon with little floating islands. Don Mariano tilted the hand, and poured the lagoon and the islands into a strip of dry cornshuck. Next he removed the string of red beans, dried the hand with another piece of cloth, and sprinkled some yellow powder into the hand. It looked like saffron.

Over the powder he placed a cigarette paper. Now he raised the candle and let three drops of grease fall onto the cigarette paper. For what seemed quite a while, during which everything stopped, he stared at the three little disks of wax. Then he poured all that, cigarette paper, wax, powder, into the cornshuck with the moist kernels, folded it up into a neat package and tied a narrow strip of red ribbon around twice, so that it crossed. Then he handed it to the Judge.

The session was over. Don Mariano got up and asked us to do likewise. We followed him to the door. On the way out, Mr. Pineapple, prompted by me, told Don Mariano that he had been having a very bad backache, and thought that something was wrong with his kidneys. Could Don Mariano tell him what to do for it?

"*Candelilla*," he answered. "I have some here. Brew it into a tea. Drink two cups every night for a month. Your backache will go away."

We lingered outside for a while. Mr. Pineapple and Don Mariano kept talking. Don Chucho managed to explain that we had come from a great distance to see him because we had heard of his great wisdom, that it might be a

long time before we could come back. If he would be good enough to tell us of some of his remedies so we could use them when we ailed, we would be glad to pay him, and to promise that we would not make use of them to cure other people.

Here are some of Don Mariano's remedies, but please remember that I promised that they are not to be used for curing, but are given here merely as curiosities:

Mistletoe to make the hair grow. Chinaberries will also do the trick.

A flower known as meadow pink, soaked in *mezcal*, to kill fever.

Milkweed for eczema, ringworm, pneumonia, and snake-bite.

The bark of liveoak trees for bleeding gums. For toothache, the thorn of a cactus.

If you are full of fright, what we might call jittery, find yourself a bit of yarrow and chew the leaves.

Thistles for bellyache.

Dandelion tea for liver trouble.

Onion poultice for insect bites.

Mullein for catarrh and diarrhea.

A brew of chile peppers for coughs.

*Retama* leaves, made into tea, for bellyache. Leaves and blossoms woven into the hair to cure headache.

Maguay and Spanish dagger (*yucca*) for almost anything.

Mistletoe for toothache.

A brew of Mexican persimmon tree bark for fever.

Baked cactus leaf as poultice to bring boils to a head, and also to draw out inflammation from bee and other insect bites.

Brew from leaves and branches of creosote bush for bellyache.

Tomatoes for sore throat.

Cactus poultice for rheumatism.

Salve from holly berry and holly bark and mutton tallow for eczema and other skin eruptions.

Dried hemp leaves for toothache, also tea from them as an emetic in case of food poisoning.

Boiled tunas (prickly pears) for gall stones, chronic appendicitis, and an assortment of intestinal aches and pains.

Cabbage poultice for croup.

Sunflower seeds for sterility.

Garlic for liver and kidney disturbances, and for stomach-ache.

The head and beak of a bird as a good luck charm for traveling. The longer the beak, the longer the journey that can be made under its protection. Don Mariano had the beak of a toucan which he said had brought him safely the long distance he had come from his native region in Mexico. He said the beak had been in his family for several generations.

We left Don Mariano and drove toward Harlingen. I decided to take whatever time was necessary at this point to revisit the score or more towns in the Lower Rio Grande Valley—the Magic Valley—to go to farmhouses, to talk with the people. I went all over Cameron and Hidalgo counties, through miles of grapefruit, orange and lemon groves, visited people I had known many years ago, attended farmers' meetings. I sat in on trials at the courthouse in Edinburg, county seat of Hidalgo county, where the famous "million dollar road to Hell" was once built. I saw the expensive school constructed out in the brush for the principal benefit of building contractors and politicians, now haunted by the ghosts of the old Hidalgo political ring.

Magic Valley . . . one town merging into another along a paved highway . . . San Benito . . . Harlingen . . . La Feria . . . Mercedes . . . Donna . . . Weslaco . . . Pharr . . . San Juan . . .

Alamo . . . McAllen . . . Mission . . . Rio Grande City . . . drive-in stands . . . fruit stalls . . . filling stations . . . liquor package stores . . . taverns . . . neon lights strung along the highway like red beans on a string . . . Magic Valley.

In Willacy county—once made notorious by a conviction of a sheriff for peonage—I saw the ground selected for migratory labor camps to be built by the federal government. I heard new versions of the Blanton case—father and son mysteriously disappeared—which is some more, and most absorbing, magic, related to the King Ranch. The King Ranch covers more than a million acres just north of the Magic Valley, and its shadow spreads over many more acres in South Texas.

The influence of the King Ranch becomes pervasive in Willacy county, like that of a powerful planet which pulls lesser masses of matter toward it by the force of gravity. I saw the famous "protected edge" of the King Ranch, the strip of border which was designated as a state game preserve. Thus state protection is provided, making at the same time a buffer between the King Ranch and the rest of the world.

Into that vast region, the Blantons, poor farmers, vanished one day, and were never seen again, alive or dead. In Hidalgo county, in Willacy county, in Cameron county, names are whispered. I heard them at least a dozen times, always in confidence. Everybody seems to know them. Everybody says nothing will be done.

In spite of ghosts and black magic, the border country grows and grows. Irrigation has made the desert bloom in Hidalgo and Cameron counties. A huge irrigation system has been constructed in Willacy county, latter-day magic of man, storing rain for the time he needs it. The federal government is building a system of reservoirs to impound flood waters of the Rio Grande.

In April I returned to Brownsville, accepting the invita-

tion of my friend, Hart Stilwell, to participate in what is known as a Tarpon Rodeo. One takes place every year, under sponsorship of Hurt Batsell, known as king of the anglers, down at the mouth of the Rio Grande. There the Big River empties its mud, and its ghosts, into the green waters of the Gulf of Mexico.

“THE CANDLE BETWEEN US...”







# VIII

## DOODLEBUG

THE road eastward out of Brownsville streaks past the airfield, the deepwater port, across the mud flats and the old Jackass Prairie where wild donkeys roamed for years. It winds in long graceful curves, like a lazy snake, over the unpopulated prairie covered with tall grass and stunted shrubs, chaparral and cactus, for miles—and then more miles of rolling sandhills as it nears the coast. Space becomes unbounded, flatness stretches to infinity, beneath a sky that is also flat. Then suddenly the arc of the horizon over the water ahead cuts you back into a finite world, a round world, bounded, limited, something that fits into an understandable picture, makes a sensible pattern.

The Judge had hardly said a word since we left Brownsville, and we were now nearing the coast. Occasionally he took a nip from his flask, after passing it around.

A heron took off, long, easy, slow-flapping, upward, in a big curve, from a ditch along the side of the road. Two water-turkeys sunned themselves at the edge. And the Judge had found his tongue.

"The Bible," he began, "is really a wonderful book. In it, the man of the Christian epoch has been able to find almost anything he wants to find—consolation, inspiration, poetry, rules of conduct for himself and for others. Between the warnings against the worship of the Golden Calf, and the glorious

story of driving the money changers from the temple, man has been able to discover cryptic phrases that will lead him to the location of great treasures, of hidden wealth, of fabulous stores of despised gold. Consider the Psalms, for instance. I remembered while we were at the witch-doctor's place that I have seen individual Psalms printed on thin tissue paper of different colors, and folded into lockets. They are used as charms sometimes to ward off sickness, sometimes as good-luck pieces.

"Here on my watch-chain I have one of the lockets. You can see how ingenious it is. This thing is far superior to a simple solid charm which serves only one purpose. It has the same advantages for the printer and vendor of these protective gadgets—and for the user, too, of course—as the safety razor has for its promoters and users. It's not the original investment that matters so much, but the repeat order. You see the locket is permanent. It is handsome as an ornament, even if it contains nothing. You can always put a photograph in it, or if you have nothing better, at least a pinch of snuff, or some magic powders which Don Mariano might be able to provide.

"Each Psalm has its own special purpose."

The Judge launched into a detailed description of different Psalms, naming them by number, and quoting from them as readily as if he had been a preacher instead of a lawyer. I made notes on some of them. Here they are, without any guarantee as to their effectiveness:

For a childless couple wishing to be blessed, Psalm I, verse three:

*And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water,  
that bringeth forth his fruit in his season;  
his leaf also shall not wither, and whatsoever he doeth  
shall prosper.*

For a man embarking on a business venture which will take him far from his home, Psalm XVIII, the entire Psalm.

To protect the wearer's life and limb while traveling aboard any conveyance, Psalm XX.

Psalm XXIII is a good one for general use and can be substituted for any of the Psalms which have specific functions in this code of magic lockets.

For the farmer plagued with drought, Psalm LXV, verses nine to thirteen. This rain-prayer must be read aloud, in the morning upon arising, and at night upon going to bed.

The Judge continued:

"There is part of one of the Psalms that I ran into over and over again when I stayed with my folks up on their farm near Wichita Falls, before they discovered oil up there. What people were hunting then was not oil, but water. There were a dozen or more men around the country who made a living locating water wells, and they always made you a proposition that nobody could turn down, because the man who owned the land thought he had nothing to lose. The water-finder said he would spot the water and tell him where to dig. If water was not found, he would not have to be paid. If it was, he would collect a fee.

"The most familiar names for their divining rods were doodlebugs and wigglegsticks. Some of the fellows used to tell the kids that they really had a doodlebug—you know the kind; he crawls down the antholes and gobbles himself a mess of ants for breakfast—and that this doodlebug had a nose that could smell out water. They'd just put the bug down on the ground, they said, and let him crawl along. When he smelled water, why he'd start burrowing on down into the ground, and that would be the place to find a well.

"Then we had the religious well-finders, those who claimed they could get divine guidance in their efforts to find water by concentrating in a strong prayer. They would

go into a kind of trance and then head right for the spot, just like a ouija board. Some of them used a Bible, and it was from these I learned about Psalm LXXVIII, and the key and Bible system for finding water. Psalm LXXVIII, you may remember, says:

*He clave the rocks in the wilderness,  
and gave them drink as out of the great depths.  
He brought streams also out of the rock,  
and caused waters to run down like rivers.*

"Well, this fellow would slip a string inside the page of the Bible that had the Psalm on it, then tie the string around the book. He'd suspend the book from a door key, a special big key. Then he would poke a forked stick into the ground, and on it he would hang the key, from which the string and Bible were suspended. If there was water on the spot, the stick would bend 'way over in an arc. I saw it work once, and I drank water from the well on the spot. Of course we found out later that there was water almost anywhere under the place. If we had sunk a hole at any spot, we would have had just as good a well as the one we drilled."

The Judge stopped for a moment to let all this soak in.

"Come to think of it," he went on, "maybe the symbol of our state should be the doodlebug instead of the bluebonnet or the mocker or the pecan nut or the Lone Star. Somebody, somewhere in Texas, is always drilling a hole in the ground looking for buried treasure of one kind or another. Ever since the territory that is now Texas was discovered people have been looking for gold.

"There was Coronado and his men hunting the fabulous Seven Cities of Cibolo. Almost anywhere you go in the state you will find old maps and charts and landmarks supposed to hold the secret of buried treasure. But we never really know whether any of these have really yielded anything but a lot

of good stories. The men who find treasure keep their mouths shut until they can get it all out, and then they vamoose. Those who don't find it either keep on hunting or else begin making up fables. The best digging we've found so far, though, has been the digging for oil."

The Judge paused for another nip at the bottle, and to fill his pipe and light it. Then he pointed out across the sandy prairies to a small mound in the distance. There, he explained, had been one of the first oil wells dug down in this part of the country, close to the Rio Grande, some years ago, but nothing came of it.

"But it won't be long, I'll bet you," he continued, "before this whole landscape is going to be a solid forest of derricks. We don't know, but the general opinion seems to be that there is oil under all this land. Why do you think all these squabbles are going on now for Padre Island?"

Padre Island is a slender strip of sand, some hundred and twenty-five miles long, off the lower Texas coast. It is shaped like a curved blanket-needle, poking down from its junction with Mustang Island just below Corpus Christi to a point opposite Port Isabel. Between Padre Island and the much smaller Brazos Island north of the Mexican mainland, is Brazos Santiago Pass. This pass links the inner lagoon, known as Laguna Madre, with the Gulf proper. The lagoon extends on up the coast, between Padre and the mainland, to Corpus Christi.

The Brownsville ship channel was dug from Brazos Santiago Pass in a beeline across the flat prairies over which we were now traveling en route to the Tarpon Rodeo. In effect, it linked the Gulf of Mexico with the Rio Grande, about twenty-six miles away. Padre itself is one—the longest—of a chain of islands that stretches on up almost to Galveston Bay.

The legends and tales, the tangle of romance, adventure, pirate gold envelop Padre Island like a living network of

seaweed. They cover the accumulation of prosaic debris, the fragile dried-out logs and fish-skeletons, occasionally yielding a pip of a yarn from the flotsam and jetsam of fable that have piled up through the centuries.

Jean Lafitte and a dozen other buccaneers, freebooters, filibusters, and privateers swaggered along the Spanish Main, robbing, fighting, loving, killing. Blackbeard, Captain Kidd, Henry Morgan—names that stir the armchair adventurer out to the oceans of yesterday—stories full of Spanish galleons and British merchantmen, buccaneers and privateers, gang-planks and pieces of eight, mutiny, shipwreck, hidden treasure and ghost ships. Of all the pirates of the Spanish Main, there is none who can hold a candle to the Boss Buccaneer of the Gulf Coast, smuggler, adventurer, military hero, patriot, and outlaw—Jean Lafitte.

Down the Gulf Coast, from Sabine Pass to the tip of Brazos Island below Port Isabel, there is hardly a spot which might not hold treasure. The long expanse of Padre Island and its protected harbors were made to order for pirate gold—Galveston Bay, Matagorda Bay, San Antonio Bay, Corpus Christi Bay, Baffin Bay, Brazos Santiago. The very names seem to promise adventure and romance.

The story of Jean Lafitte's life in New Orleans is quite familiar now to all magazine and movie fans. His smuggling operations, the great illegal power he wielded—strong enough to challenge the governor—his act of redemption in joining the United States forces to fight the British in 1812, his subsequent pardon—all these mark the earlier phase of Lafitte's life, and open into a second period which is so stormy and so uncertain that it has become a vehicle for almost any kind of pirate story you can imagine.

The scene shifts in the second period from New Orleans to Galveston Island, off the Texas coast. There Lafitte settled after departing from the United States. Life had become too

tame and too complicated. The opportunities for plunder had taken channels of speculation, legalized gambling, and usury, for all of which an old smuggler and pirate did not have the proper training. His more direct technique of acquiring booty carried him down the Gulf Coast, the edge of what was practically a No Man's Land, theoretically owned by the Mexican government. But it was so neglected that it actually was the shifting prize of freebooters and filibusters, renegades and outlaws—men with so much to gain and so little to lose that they were ready to take any chances.

With Galveston as his base, Lafitte became the terror of the Gulf of Mexico. His ships, flying the flags of remote and practically unheard-of countries, pillaged and fired and looted the ships laden with precious goods or chests of gold. In Galveston, Lafitte occupied what became known as the great Red House. This was a superb island castle, fitted out in all the splendor of an Asiatic potentate's palace.

There was beauty, too, in the life of this magnificent marauder, a story of romance with a lovely French girl, Madeline. She became the queen of the island whereon the bold bad buccaneer ruled with an iron hand. The girl, according to the most accepted accounts, had come over to the New World with a group of French immigrants. They had arranged to colonize a strip of land some distance from the Gulf, to create there new vineyards like those of their homeland. One thing after another happened to the colony, to Madeline, and to Lafitte, until the girl wound up as Queen of the Island. In the meantime, he and his men had been busy burying chests of gold, cannons with gold-stuffed muzzles, and booty of all kinds, up and down Old Padre.

It was not all heave-ho and buried treasure with Lafitte, however. When he moved to Galveston he made of that port the most notorious outlaw slave market in the New World. There Negroes could be obtained at a good bit under the

prevailing market prices. Lafitte had a crew of drummers touring the plantations and the city slave markets of the South. The story is told that among his crack salesmen were three brothers whose name became a famous one in Texas history. They were the Bowie brothers, Rezin, James and John, who were among the early pioneers westward. Jim Bowie has become one of the Texas immortals in the siege of the Alamo, and is famed far and wide for the knife he perfected and for his skill in using it on the foe.

The gun-flints provided by Lafitte to Andrew Jackson were a big factor in the winning of the Battle of New Orleans. He was pardoned in return for his aid, but the pirate could not keep out of trouble with the United States government. He got along all right as long as his ships confined their operations to Spanish or British vessels. When they assaulted American ships, Lafitte was paid a visit, a very friendly but firm visit, by one Lieutenant Kearney of the United States Navy. Lieutenant Kearney whispered to the pirate that it might be advisable to leave American waters. The story thereafter is that more treasure was buried along the coast, and that Lafitte went to Yucatan, planning to return later for his hidden loot. He was crestfallen, however, and it is said that he died a disillusioned and heartbroken pirate, and left his treasures untouched.

The exciting days of revolutions throughout Latin America—one after another war by an American nation against Spain—made the Texas coast a rendezvous of patriots and of soldiers of fortune. This was the period during which our War of 1812 was fought. After it was over, a number of naval officers turned to privateering under the flag of Venezuela or some other South American country.

A notable visitor to Galveston Island at this time was a Spaniard, Francisco Xavier Mina, who sympathized with the cause of Mexico against Spain. He had gone to the United

States for assistance. On his way to Mexico he was accompanied by several former officers of the United States Navy and a number of former British Army officers, recently mustered out. These former foes were now joining the same force to fight against the traditional enemy, Spain.

Mina is of particular interest, too, because his activities reveal how closely the whole Mexican fight for independence was tied up with the Texan independence movement against Mexico. Both the United States and Great Britain at this time were actively interested in helping the Latin American republics break away from Spanish domination.

Mina organized an expedition, first in England, and later in the United States, on supposedly neutral territory, against a theoretically friendly nation. He met General Winfield Scott of the United States Army in London in 1815. London at that time was the refuge of many Republican revolutionaries from Spain. Scott reputedly told him he could count on aid in the United States. In London, then the most liberal capital of Europe, Mina also met the liberal Mexican priest, Fray Servando Teresa de Mier. They agreed on plans for an expedition to Mexico against the Royalist reactionary government then in power.

The Spanish Republican first went to Norfolk, Virginia, and from there to Baltimore, Philadelphia, and New York. He obtained financial assistance from a group of American merchants, and splendid publicity in American newspapers. More than a hundred American volunteers enlisted with him before sailing for Galveston Island. There he planned to meet Don Luis de Aury, a former navy man who had become a privateer and who had joined the Mexican insurgents. They named de Aury governor of Texas. It was at Galveston that Mina made contact with de Aury who, however, remained as head of the new Texas island republic he had proclaimed. Mina sailed on down the Texas and Mexican coasts

to Soto la Marina, where he landed his forces and began an amazing series of military victories that seriously crippled the anti-Republican forces.

De Aury was a pirate whose stature is almost as great as that of Lafitte's in the lore of the Spanish Main. He sailed to Galveston Island—then known as Snake Island—originally to set himself up as a rival to Lafitte. In a short time he had built a colony of some five hundred men. His operations were fully as extensive as Lafitte's and he, too, got along all right until he made the mistake of attacking United States shipping. He had grown so powerful by 1817 that he sent one of his ships up the Mississippi. At the height of his career, he had something like a quarter of a million dollars on deposit in New Orleans banks, not to mention, of course, all the treasure which he had buried in still undiscovered holes on desolate Padre Island.

De Aury was then also formally declared a pirate, and he left the Texas coast to join the far-famed Sir Gregor MacGregor, who was preying on the slave-trade vessels off the coast of Florida. MacGregor went to South America to put himself at the service of some of the Republican revolutionaries, and de Aury took over the business that MacGregor had built up. He again made the same mistake—boarding a United States ship—and he was put out of business. He is supposed to have retired and married a rich woman in New Orleans. Then he sought adventure again, sailed for Havana, and there he died about 1844, in poverty.

Another major figure among the stalwarts of the Texas coast and the Spanish Main was Captain Campbell, an imposing, dashing figure, six feet tall, who hailed from Maryland. He had served in the United States Army in 1812, and was reported to have helped row the boat that made history with Perry in it, when the frail skiff braved the fire of British men-of-war. Campbell operated from Point Bolivar, north

of Galveston, and brought his loot in at a spot known as the Rollover, peculiarly appropriate for hidden loot and wraiths of ships. Campbell was one of the few pirates who knew when he had enough. He retired while he was still in the money, burned his ship, and became a respected citizen of Texas, and as such he died.

The history of the vanished city of Bagdad also belongs to the lore of Padre. Bagdad blossomed in the morning of a decade full of bitter conflict, and vanished in the sunset of that decade. A hurricane swept Bagdad back to the sea that had deposited a weird conglomeration of humanity from the ends of the earth onto a desert stretch of sand, just south of Padre, on the Mexican mainland.

Thus we find that the doodlebug—symbol of man's passion for buried treasure—has pointed its nose toward Padre Island as far back as man can remember in the New World. As far back as he can remember in the written record known as history—memory of humanity's collective experiences. And in the unwritten record of legend—the daydream of the collective mind. Fabulous gold of Indians brought Spaniards. Fabulous gold of Spaniards brought adventurers from other nations. Through the years the fable has mounted in proportion. No great treasures have actually been found, as far as is known, but men continue to search for them, on Padre, and along the Gulf Coast. Now the search has turned to a treasure man did not deposit—oil.

The doodlebug has more recently been harnessed by the oil-hunters. It has become a precision instrument. Perhaps, as the Judge opined, that will be the reward for the centuries of digging. Petroleum may prove the materialization of the tales woven every time somebody stumbles on a new clue to the Lost City of Padre Island.

The beginnings of the Lost City are buried, perhaps irretrievably, in the sands, along with the treasures that men

tell about in their stories. Its history, or legend, traces back to the roamings of the mysterious Carancahua Indians, supposedly tall, blond, and eaters of human flesh.

Several years ago a resident of Brownsville made an exploration trip up Padre Island and returned with a collection of objects that included arrowheads, brass-handled swords, some Belgian coins, spurs, bullets, rings. He reported that the wind had blown clear a space which disclosed the remains of a settlement, covering approximately one-half a square mile. The ever-smoldering interest in the mysteries of Padre flared again. Treasure-hunter, fable-spinner and historian were inspired anew. Expeditions were formed to traverse the entire island. One group found the remains of what had been a blacksmith's anvil, along with some tools of the trade; enclosures that apparently had been used as corrals for livestock, more bullets, some women's rings and some human bones.

The renewed interest in the mysteries of Padre revived the question of what had become of the Carancahua Indians, who were undoubtedly among the earliest inhabitants of the island. One version is that the Carancahuas, after defeating the Comanches in a great battle, were wiped out through eating the carcasses of their cattle which had perished from a plague. One Carancahua, a semi-legendary figure who became known as Indian Tom, did not eat of the infected flesh, and lived to tell the story.

Samuel C. Reid Jr., in his *McCulloch's Texas Rangers*, published about 1850, has another story to tell. According to Reid, the Indians were living on the shore of Matagorda Bay, north of Matagorda Island—one of the coastal chain that includes Padre—when the Frenchman LaSalle landed there about 1665. These Indians were cannibals, he says, and apparently also very good fighters. Reid states further:

"The history of this tribe is a most singular one—driven

along the shores of Texas by the tide of White emigration, they found in every Indian tribe implacable foes. Pressed on by the Whites, pursued and hunted down by the Mexicans, defeated and cut to pieces by the Comanches, Lipans and other prairie Indians, wherever they were caught on the plains, they gained a scanty subsistence by gathering oysters along the seashore, and fishing in the bay. They finally pitched upon Matagorda Bay as a place of residence, but were again driven out by the Texans who rapidly settled along the shores.

"To be persecuted and oppressed, to be downtrodden and insulted, seemed to be the unhappy fate of this miserable race: until, driven to desperation by their sufferings, they resolved to put an end to their name and race forever. Murdering their women and children, the warriors sought for some uninhabited island, where they could wait patiently for death which was forever to destroy all trace of their tribe. It is now said they must have chosen Padre Island as a suitable spot to linger out the remnants of their miserable lives and make their lonely graves."

Padre Nicolas Balli, the priest in whose name the original grant to Padre Island was given, reputedly established a settlement there early in the nineteenth century. Since that time, according to the stories told, the site of The Lost City has been a base for Texan expeditionaries; a camp set up by General Zachary Taylor during the Mexican War; a ranch of the King and Kenedy cattle interests; the branding camp of Pat Dunn, "Lord of Padre" for many years. It has been a long time since people lived on the island.

The population of ghosts, however, continues to thrive. And now there they were, moving with us as we drove toward the Gulf of Mexico—cannibal Indians—freebooters—privateers—filibusters—Spanish galleons—doubloons—pieces-of-eight—cutlasses—mutiny—revolutionary plots—buried pots of

gold—phantom ships unloading their swag in the Texas coast inlets. . . .

All these traveled with us now as we turned off the pavement, moved out onto the sands of the beach, and headed south toward the mouth of the Rio Grande and the Tarpon Rodeo.





# IX

## SALT SPRAY

WE WERE late in arriving at the Tarpon Rodeo, but since our interest in fishing was secondary it did not matter much. The fishermen had got there at daybreak. Now they were lined up on both the Mexican and American banks for a couple of miles. Some were casting their lines out, others were baiting hooks with mullet or attaching artificial lures. Here one was reeling in, there another was horsing a strike, over yonder a third was telling the fellow down the line about the one that just got away.

Screeching sea gulls looped and dived and circled overhead. Each flock was a separate unit, within which the individual birds traced geometrical patterns in their flight, etching an endless series of abstract compositions against the clean sharp blue of the sky. One entire flock shifted in unison, as if on the crest of an airwave, over the river, across the sand bar, over the pounding waves of the Gulf, zooming down in a power dive at a school of shrimp, skimming across the surface after a rush of mullet, rising again in a graceful sweep sideways and upward and around, almost as if responding to music in waltz time.

The steady turbulent rush of the Rio Grande, brownish-gray-muddy, pushed into the surf. The breakers, churning and foaming, crashed over the shallow sand bars in a gay explosion of salt spray. Along the beach where we drove,

hundreds of bloated Portuguese men-of-war—iridescent jelly-fish with long stringy appendages—lay helpless on the drying sand, slowly shrinking in the sun. They popped like punctured balloons as the wheels of the automobile rolled over them, leaving squashed masses of protoplasm ground into the gritty sandgrains. The bracing smell of the salt air blew shoreward on a stiff breeze.

We got the fishing rigs that Stilwell had prepared. He came along in the skiff that was to take us over to the Mexican bank. The Judge stayed behind. He said he would do his fishing in the tent. Mr. Pineapple came along. He would now have the thrill of stepping on Mexican soil again for the first time in many years. As a matter of fact, though, there seemed to be little difference either in texture or appearance between the American and the Mexican sides of the Rio Grande, except for the row of automobiles lined up on the American bank.

"On the maps you get the idea that you are going into an entirely different world," Mr. Pineapple observed. "The heavy black lines that mark the border, and the different colors of the two countries somehow give you the feeling of something final. Here it is just a narrow body of water and the crossing of it in a skiff, much as you might cross a stream anywhere. If you did not know it was such a solemn thing as crossing an international border, you might never even think of it that way, would you?"

At the other bank, we had about a three-mile walk ahead of us, for our goal was the site of what once was the magnificently wild city of Bagdad. It had been a fortune-hunters' paradise on stilts, a city without law, without morals, without scruples, a human jungle.

We headed for the last big turn which the Rio Grande makes before its final spill into the Gulf. It was opposite that bend, on the sands between the river and the Gulf, that

Bagdad flared in a brief, malevolent splurge of glory. It was like a corner of Hell that had been washed up on the bank, only to be washed out again in a hurricane. Its inhabitants had lived with that wild intensity of beings who know that it will all be over soon.

But even the ghosts were gone now, the point of land that poked into the Gulf as bare and deserted as it was centuries ago. Driftwood in various stages of pulverization rotted among the stubby growths, almost the same color as the sand. Occasionally there was a brilliant splash of green, a carpet of marine vine that crawled over the sand tenaciously, as alive as the sandcrabs that scuttled across it. The waxy-leaved vines seemed to be gripping desperately into the loose sand, straining to get back into the sea.

On our walk we met two fishermen who had tarpon strikes, and we watched them both. The first tarpon, about four feet long, leaped clear out of the water, hit the mullet-weighted hook, and tore loose from it in mid-air. His gleaming, writhing, dripping body slapped into the water and cut its way back down into the depths, leaving a bubbling whirlpool on the surface.

The second strike produced a real fight between man and fish. The huge, shining tarpon hurtled out of the water in a flash of scattering spray. But this one was hooked firmly. He dived back into the water as the fisherman braced the butt of his rod into the leather harness that looped over his right groin. There the harness formed a deep socket into which the end of the rod fitted like a sword in a scabbard. The fisherman reeled in his line a bit, to keep it taut, for the least bit of slack would give the tarpon a chance to cut the line. The fish plunged downward, and headed toward the opposite bank. Twenty other anglers near by reeled in their lines and moved over to the scene of the battle, shouting and screaming advice.

"Horse 'im!"

"Let 'im take it!"

"Raise your rod!"

"Fight 'im, Cowboy!"

And, from one of the fishermen who was doing most of his angling out of a quart bottle—it now stuck out of the right hip-pocket of his khaki coveralls—came a series of wild, ear-piercing shrieks:

"Yowee-e-e-e-e! Whee-e-e-e-e! Ha-ha hye! Ha Hyee-e-eeyow!"

It was an ecstatic call of the wild, like a combination of Tarzan's call and the shriek of a coyote gone plumb mad. But there was no doubting it—this man was getting a real thrill out of the battle, maybe more than the man fighting the fish.

The fisherman's muscles had tightened now and he gritted his teeth, as he wrestled with fifty-four inches of marine royalty—a Silver King, fighting, with all the power, agility and cunning it knew, fighting desperately for its life.

The battle lasted about twenty minutes. Exhausted, the fish let himself be reeled into shallow water and that was his finish. There it was just a matter of dragging him onto the bank, where he flopped and turned before coming to rest, aware that he was far from water. The fisherman, worn out fully as much as the tarpon, squatted on the sand, while one of the judges raced toward him from the distance, waving a tape measure.

From the scene of this exciting spectacle to the site of old Bagdad about a mile remained. On the way, Stilwell, who knows about these things from many years of actual fishing and from writing about them, gave us a short course on the tarpon, the fightingest sports fish in the coastal waters of the Gulf of Mexico. It is like dropping from the sublime to the ridiculous to witness the magnificent joust, the majestic leap of a tarpon, and then to be told that the beautiful fish is just

a great big sardine. But such are the facts of life. Tarpon and sardine and herring are members of the same family, cousins, you might say.

"When we get back to camp," Stilwell said, "I'll see if we can round up old Toby Fishscale. He's been around the Texas coast, fishing and sailing for a long time, a couple of centuries at least. No man could accumulate all the experiences and stories in Toby's repertoire in just one lifetime, so I imagine he's lived through several reincarnations. And if his crony, Forty Fathoms, isn't dead drunk under a pier somewhere, you'll hear plenty about the life of a seaman in wild and woolly Texas.

"One of Toby's favorite yarns is about the time he lived on Mustang Island—that's the island just above Padre—off the Corpus Christi shore. Toby says he was out in his sailboat one day when they sighted a small sailing craft adrift, the sails hanging down in folds. They set out toward the boat, and what do you think they found? There was the corpse of a man, and right beside him a dead tarpon.

"Toby figured it out like this: The man had run into a school of tarpon, and as the boat cut through them, they got panicky and started jumping furiously. One of them leaped high into the air, ripped off the sail and knocked the man's head against the boat, breaking his neck and killing both the man and the fish. We don't think this story is so far-fetched, either, because every once in a while we'll come across something approaching it. Of course fish stories always improve with age."

We all sat down on the beach when we reached the site of old Bagdad. All of us, that is, except Mr. Pineapple, who was off poking around into the sandcrabs' holes, in among the weeds and driftwood. After a while he came back with some trophies of the hunt: fragments of crockery, a couple of brass buttons, a board with some iron mountings, a few rusty nails,

and some triangular chips of glass; enough, probably, for some archeologist to reconstruct the history of the place for the last two hundred years.

We now faced north, toward the Rio Grande. Stilwell pointed across the river.

"There," he said, "was the village of Clarksville. It started with a post established by General Zachary Taylor, and later became a station for the King and Kenedy boat line that plied the Rio Grande. The village was named for Captain Clark, a Yankee who settled there."

Originally Bagdad was just a somnolent little fishing village, a settlement more or less of the same character as Clarksville, with just a few scattered houses and no streets, nor anything even remotely resembling streets. Bagdad and Clarksville were, with the sole exception of their marine location, much like a dozen other twin settlements along the Rio Grande—American on one side and Mexican on the other, with more Spanish than English spoken in both of them. The Civil War was the main cause of the rise of Bagdad, for that conflict made it almost impossible to get the Southern cotton through the Union blockade. And the world clamored for cotton.

Cotton was selling for around thirteen cents a pound when the war broke out. Within a year it rose to thirty-one cents; by 1862, the market price was sixty-seven cents. At the height of the conflict, in 1863, cotton was being quoted at the fabulous price of a dollar and two cents a pound. This precious wealth of the South could find its outlet through Mexico. Brownsville became a major export center. Once the cotton was over the Rio Grande, it was safely out of reach of the Union troops. From Matamoros, on the Mexican side, it was taken to Bagdad, and from there lightered out to the ships that waited to transport it overseas.

The great cotton-rush brought wealth seekers from all

over the world. Some of them had stopped before at other Gulf points, mainly New Orleans. It was the flavor of New Orleans that gave Bagdad the peculiar atmosphere it acquired. All the business houses, saloons, gambling halls, theaters, were named after similar establishments in the Louisiana city. The structures were all of wood, most of them two stories high, in contrast to the low one-story buildings of the earlier Bagdad and of Clarksville. Streets were laid out, and the sidewalks were made of wooden planks. The buildings were set up on high pilings for protection against heavy blows that brought sudden rises of the Gulf waters. At high tide, the streets, covered with water, became canals, making the city look like a grotesque caricature of Venice.

Offshore, hundreds of vessels, flying flags of every known nation, and many of nations that few had heard of, were anchored, awaiting their cargoes. With the spread of the blockade, gunboats and warships appeared not far from the merchantmen. At first most of the warships flew the American flag, but soon fighting ships of the French Navy appeared, sent over to aid Maximilian and the Mexican conservative party in the war against Juarez. During this time, both Clarksville and Bagdad suffered heavy bombardments.

Bagdad-on-the-Rio Grande was a swaggering, hell-raising, twenty-four-hour city. Business houses, saloons, theaters, never closed, for there were thousands of people coming in at night and during the day: crews from the warships and merchantmen, soldiers from one army or another, traders, salesmen, sharpers, pirates from the Padre Island bases, gamblers, promoters. It was a Babel of languages and a hodge-podge of races, perhaps something like a slice of Shanghai. That world port, too, sent a goodly contingent of its prize human exhibits to Bagdad, exhibits both Oriental and Occidental.

You could find, too, a few brave and inspired individuals

who sought to save the souls that were being taken down the road to Hell in this infernal mushroom. One ecstatic individual, known as Preacher John, made the rounds of the saloons and theaters and innumerable gambling joints, prophesying the day of doom. His favorite audience was an Irish bartender, who survived the Bagdad hurricane, and who later told the story of Preacher John.

"The Lord will not permit this work of the Devil to continue," the bartender quoted Preacher John as predicting. "You shall see. Soon a holocaust will descend upon this foul swamp of perdition. Remember Sodom and Gomorrah. Come now and be baptized, I tell you, for when the day comes, only those who have taken religion will be saved. The rest of you will be wiped off the face of the earth. And the first to go will be you who purvey this demon in bottled form, the hellish fire of booze that burns a man's soul within him."

Bagdad began its decline with the close of the Civil War. But the actual end came almost as if it were the fulfillment of Preacher John's prophecies. A hurricane lashed the coast for two days, and when its fury had subsided, most of Bagdad had gone with it. A few splinters of piling were left. A few of the inhabitants remained. Most of them were gone. Some had fled when the storm approached. Others were destroyed in the fierce blow. The Irish bartender survived, later to chuckle over his miraculous escape, which made a Christian of him, and to relate sadly that he had found Preacher John's body, smashed against a pile of debris.

The ghosts of Bagdad had returned to life for us. On the way back to the camp across the Rio Grande, there was very little conversation. Most of that was just a few observations about the strange ways of men and of fate, of the moving finger, and other obvious, very trite things that men will say when they are deeply affected, too deeply affected to find pretty words for their feelings.

But the stage had been set perfectly for more stories, perhaps for a whole night of them. There were ten or twelve of us who sat down around the big bonfire, built from driftwood logs piled into a blazing pyramid. A few remarks about Bagdad turned the conversation toward other mushroom towns, settlements that had bloomed with the promise of permanent growth, only to vanish overnight—ghost towns. This was just the opening the Judge needed. He has a special fondness for ghosts, as well as for rattling skeletons of all kinds. We sat and watched the bonfire and let the Judge take us on a distant excursion, far away in time and space, a tour of the ghost towns of Texas.

Scores of ghost towns can be found in Texas, shells of what were once thriving communities, now in various stages of decay. Some are completely abandoned, the crumbling ruins mere tombstones marking the spot where many hopes and dreams are buried. Some are only partly abandoned, a few residents still clinging to the place they call home, eking out a living with a small farm, a few animals. Other ghost towns have vanished entirely, absorbed into the confines of a ranch as the old range reasserted its primeval rights, taking back into pasture or wild brush country the area that had been subtracted for an ephemeral bit of civilization.

What makes a town into a ghost town? There are various causes. Perhaps the most common breaker of towns is the same influence which brought into being hundreds of new communities—the railroad. For one reason or another—usually something involving the granting of concessions which the railroads demanded—the rails passed up many communities already in existence. They took routes instead over completely undeveloped and unpopulated regions whose owners were able to foresee the possibilities of gain from the miracle of the iron horse. Where towns were passed up by the railroad, the communities soon began to decline and the inhabi-

tants moved over to the tracks. In other cases, ghost towns have come into being as a result of booms—perhaps mining, or oil, or an industrial boom that spent its first impulse in a few years.

The tremendous power of the railroads to destroy as well as to build can be seen clearly in the case of such a town as Jefferson, once a thriving community of thirty thousand or more inhabitants, in Northeast Texas. In 1860, Jefferson was known over what was then the new frontier, as the "Queen of the West." Packet boats, piled high with bales of cotton, steamed down Big Cypress Bayou, carrying planters, gamblers, cattlemen, ladies and gentlemen of the Old South. There were times when twelve or fifteen big river steamboats were docked at the same time along the three-mile wharf where today there is only a shallow pond.

It was "Jay Gould's curse" that sent Jefferson on the downgrade. When he came to Texas, demanding concessions for his line, the citizens, content with what they regarded as an assured future, spurned his proposition. They refused to disturb the tranquil streets, lined with large frame buildings. They did not desire the clang and smoke of iron horses. About the same time, the federal government undertook some dredging work below Shreveport, Louisiana. The net result, as far as Jefferson was concerned, was to deprive the Big Cypress of its water, and it was no longer navigable. No water route, no railroad.

The hotel register, on which Jay Gould signed the pictograph of his name—a line drawing of a jaybird—is still preserved, and on it is the curse which Gould pronounced. He wrote, on the same page: "end of Jefferson, Texas."

*Grass will grow in your streets and bats will roost  
in your belfries if you do not let me run my  
railroad through your town.*

Jay Gould took his railroad three miles away. Jefferson sank into a period of quiet decay. Only recently has it begun to show signs of life—oil.

That story of Jefferson is pretty much the story of scores of towns throughout Texas, passed up by the railroads; sometimes because they preferred to go elsewhere; other times because they could not get what they wanted from the town in the way of land grants and other gifts.

Typical of another kind of ghost town—the community that mushroomed with industrial development—is Thurber, in Erath county. Coal was the wealth sought out there originally. The Texas and Pacific Coal Company, a giant corporation with the power of breaking a strike, moved in after the smaller impresarios were deadlocked with workers in the days of the Molly Maguires and the Knights of Labor. With coal alone, Thurber was just a mining community. It was the discovery that the huge clay deposits were excellent for paving-brick that sent the town into a boom. Soon brick plants blossomed all over the place. Labor agents, combing the country for cheap labor, sent a motley assortment to Thurber—Italians, Mexicans, Chinese, Poles, Bohemians, Russians, Germans, Irish, Scots, Welsh, Negroes. The boom died and they scattered.

Today there is a filling station and a café, operated by one man, in what used to be a busy company town, with schools, an opera house, all the things that go to make up a community. The old kilns and warehouses are just piles of brick. The mesquite has crept back to claim the land, and is poking its hardy roots through the soil once more.

Perhaps the most famous of all Texas ghost towns is the place known as Tascosa, in the Panhandle, and its "Boothill Cemetery." Tascosa and Hogtown, the tough side of Tascosa, have been immortalized as among the last of the frontier "shootin' towns." Tascosa, now a mass of ruins, like an old

dried flower that has begun to crumble, grew up from a little Mexican ranch settlement of adobe huts. The Anglo-American came, killed the buffalo, drove out the Indians, and finally ousted the Mexicans. Then, a brief period of six-gun glory followed, helping to populate the Boothill Cemetery with men who died with their boots on.

Time, and the railroads, finally lured nearly all the residents from Tascosa, once an important point along the cattle trail to Dodge City. A little over fifty-three years ago, the last gunfight—and it was a humdinger—was fought on the streets of Old Tascosa, the Panhandle boomtown. Four men were slain in the fight, and three of them were buried in Boothill Cemetery.

The Judge had run dry. He came to a dead stop, and reached for his bottle. Mr. Pineapple picked up the guitar and broke the spell with a song about Mexicans on the move:

*Adios, estado de Texas  
Ya dejo tu plantacion.  
Me pelo de tu tierra,  
Ya no pizco algodón.  
En los trenes del Tipi  
Los que pasan por Luisiana  
Vamos los Mexicanos  
Al trabajo de Indiana. . .*

"Farewell, state of Texas," his song said, "I am leaving your plantations; I am shaking off your dust and no longer will I pick cotton, for on the T-P trains we go, those that enter Louisiana, we go, we go, we Mexicans go, to work in Indiana."

That's a loose translation of a very sad song, with many more verses, telling of Mexicans who came from many parts of their country to work in the United States. How some got worn out, and others got into trouble and went to jail, and others were rounded up by the immigration officials. Some

contracted to work on farms and ranches and were paid off when the work was done. As they left, with their pay, they were shot down by their employers, who recovered the money and left the Mexicans to die.

By this time, the fishermen around the bonfire were champing at the bit, aching to relate their adventures with the tarpon. When the song ended, one after another entertained the gathering with his story of the day's fight with the fish, post-mortems by those who had been successful, ingenious excuses from those who had fought a losing battle. Then the talk turned to fish stories of other times, and branched out to snake stories and buzzard stories, crawfish stories, cowboy yarns, liquor stories. The question of the feud between the roadrunner and the rattlesnake was settled all over again, this time by one of the men who was sure that the snakes hypnotized birds and rabbits before killing them. He swore that he had seen a big rattler devouring a full-grown chaparral-cock.

I was wondering now whether Toby Fishscale and Forty Fathoms would appear to finish out the evening. Toby did show up. He looked like Popeye the Sailor, teeth gone, a pipe stuck in his involuted lips, but an abundant growth of gray hair on his head, and a generous gray stubble on his face. He was bare from the waist up, and wore only a faded pair of blue dungarees under which his scaly bare feet stuck out. But our rodeo was to end without giving us the pleasure of meeting Forty Fathoms. It seems, so Toby reported, that Forty had set up a soda-pop stand down at the bend to pick up a few extra pennies from the fishermen. He also sold them bait. But Forty did not serve himself any soda-pop. He got hold of a bottle of sterner stuff, and was soon hitting it pretty steadily. The last they saw of him at the stand, he was a-hollerin' and a-whoopin' and a-laughin' like loco, giving the soda-pop away free to all comers, so Toby reported.

"He wouldn't take no money for it, and when it was all gone, he finishes up his bottle and staggers over to where some parties was camping," Toby continued. "He stumbles around a while, and the first thing you know there he was crumpled up, down in the barbecue pit, and beginning to roast his ornery old hide. We fished him out and put him under the pier, and I'm thinking he'll have a nice long sleep."

A fisherman told of the time he saw a devilfish swallow a hundred-pound anchor that a lone angler in a skiff had dropped overboard. The devil just took that anchor and off he plunged on a dead run out to the Gulf, pulling the skiff after him. He went about four miles before another party spied the unfortunate fisherman's plight and saved him.

"That musta been some hungry fish all right," Toby allowed. "It kinda reminds me of the good old days when the tarpon used to bite so fast and furious, and got so hungry they'd sneak up into shallow water where we kept our bait. Finally we just had to put a lock on our bait box to keep them out.

"No, sir, there ain't no fishin' these days like the kind we used to get then. Let me tell you, I used to sit on the bank of the lagoon there and oftentimes in just one hour I'd have me a hundred redfish on the bank, and a few trout mixed in with 'em. Every once in a while a deer would run by and I'd take my rifle and give it to 'em. And when I'd get tired and hungry, I'd just reach down into the water and bring up an armful of oysters for my meal.

"I tell you the fish was so thick that some nights we would go out without any tackle at all. We'd just put a bright lantern on the bow of the boat and go rowing through the water, and before we'd gone hardly any ways at all, the boat would be full. They just jumped right in. Other times a man could go out and fish without hooks. He'd just take a soup bone on the end of a wire and drop it into the water, and every time

he'd pull up, there would be a nice trout just hanging on for dear life. Even the womenfolks went out and got a mess of fish in just no time. A pretty girl could wade into the water and just scoop up the fish in her apron, and when that wouldn't hold no more, she could fill her sunbonnet. A couple of fishermen dropped their rods out there once and lost them. But they didn't quit. They just used their fingers for bait, and it worked just like the soup bone.

"But there was only one man I ever knew who really cashed in on it all before the commercial fish houses came along with their big seines and cleaned out most of the fish. That was old Ed, who had a wagon that he used for picking up food scraps at the hotels and restaurants. Well, old Ed would get his wagon full of scraps, and then he'd back it into the water until the wagon was covered. He'd just set there a while and then he'd drive out. The scraps was all gone and he had him a wagonload of fish to peddle around the town the next day or two."

The Judge snorted a little, and said he just wouldn't bother telling about the time when he was out west working as a cowhand and roped a great big eagle while it was making a meal out of a baby calf. The eagle was so heavy from eating it couldn't get off the ground.

"You can believe almost anything if you get in the right frame of mind," said the Judge. "It's just a matter of adjusting yourself, like Finnegan when he went to Heaven. First thing he's there striking up a conversation with St. Peter.

"'It's a fine job you've been having up here for such a long time, isn't it now?' Finnegan asked St. Peter.

"'Well, it's not so long if you get the hang of the way we keep time and do all our counting up here. You see we count a million years as a minute, just like we count a million dollars as a penny.'

"'You don't say? Look here, brother, I'm runnin' kinda

short of change. It isn't possible you could be lendin' a fellow a penny, is it?"

"Sure, and why not?" St. Peter replied. "Just wait a minute."

Mr. Pineapple was at his guitar again.

*Y aqui estoy porque ya vine,  
Porque quiero y porque si,  
Vengo a ver si encuentro uno  
Que pueda igualarme a mi.*

Which says, more or less, I'm here because I'm here because I'm here, oh, I'm here because I've come, because I want to, and just because. I'm here to see if I can find another one who can match me.

Uncle Dan, a veteran fisherman and hunter, who came to the Rodeo all the way from San Antone hadn't said a word all night. It was past two o'clock now. His silence was most unusual, Stilwell said, because as a rule Uncle Dan took the floor at the beginning of a session and held it right on through with a few interruptions.

"I'll see if we can touch him off," Stilwell said to me. Then aloud:

"Say, thinking about all that early fishing and hunting kind of makes you believe that the whole Southwest must sure have been wonderful country fifty or sixty years ago."

It was the spark Uncle Dan needed.

"Well, I dunno if it was so wonderful," he said. "I know just what you're thinkin' that you could go out to any river and throw in a hook and pull out a fish, and that you could go to any clump of brush and point your gun anywhichway and get all the game you wanted."

"Sure, that's exactly what I mean," Stilwell replied, egging him on. "Now, what could be nicer? Just to be turned loose in a country like that, lots of wild turkey, wild geese, doves,

quail, javelina, buffalo, deer, anything you wanted. Boy, and today we've got to walk miles and miles to come up on a lone buck."

"Maybe you'd look at it different, if you'da lived those days, and then these days, too, when hunting's a sport and not murder. Take deer, now. I recollect some shootin' back in eighty-seven. I was shootin' for the market then, what was known as a commercial hunter, so I know what I'm talking about. I was out every day with my horse, my hounds and my guns.

"Some of the commercial hunters before my day were hired by the plantations, the cotton and the cane growers, to bring in food for the slaves, and also for the planters. Nobody thought much of venison in those days. What the planters wanted was beef for themselves and pork, wild-hog meat, for the niggers.

"When I went out, it was for deer. I remember the time I was just coming around a little motte of scrub oak and right there in front of me was a whole herd of deer. I opened up. I shot at one, and the others looked, just curious, and not scared a bit. They didn't even move. Then I shot another one. And another. By that time, all the noise had frightened them and they were milling around a little. But they stopped runnin' after a few paces. So I shot four more before they got outa range. That made seven deer, and that was a pretty good day's work in them days.

"Now, you're not going to sit there and tell me that kind of shootin' made a lot of fun, are you? Look how things are today. Maybe you spend three days huntin' a deer, follerin' his tracks and creepin' along quiet and careful and maybe you finally spot one. He's high-tailin' it and if you get a shot you're lucky, and if you hit 'im you're even luckier. But if you do hit 'im, you've really done something, whereas we just used to ride up to 'em and slaughter 'em."

Uncle Dan said his dad had told him about even wilder days, around 1850 and 1855. One of the great events in North and Northeast Texas in those days was the famous "settlement hunt." Hunting parties were formed in each of the communities that had settled along the Trinity River bottoms. The different teams would go out for an all-day hunt and in the evening they all met at a designated spot and counted up their game. A deer counted ten points, a wild turkey five points. All the other game, like squirrels and rabbits, counted one point. The losers paid off by supplying all the liquor for a couple of days' spree, and that was a lot of liquor.

One kind of game which has vanished, along with the buffalo, is the wild cattle, untamed Longhorns that roamed over the brushland. A good hunter might kill three or four animals during a morning. Pretty soon the butchering squad would be called and the animals cut up in grand style right where they had been shot. The field butchers were a handy lot, so not much was left for the buzzards.

Dogs were used for hunting wild hogs and even for wild turkeys. The hogs often formed a circle and charged a hunter if he was on foot, so the best way to fight them was from a horse. For the turkeys a special decoy call was used, made from a wingbone of the turkey hen. The turkeys would be treed by the dogs sometimes. The birds were so frightened they would not fly. They'd sit there and watch, almost hypnotized, while the dogs stirred up an awful racket without stopping till the hunter had himself a good shot.

Immense herds of deer, buffalo and mustangs—wild horses—roamed over the state in the old days. These not only were a delight to the man with a gun, but also inspired many a man to write poetry about the noble animals that streaked across the plains, their manes and tails flying in the wind. Even back in the old days, writers warned of the danger that

these animals would become extinct if the wholesale slaughter was not stopped. D. B. Edwards, writing in 1836, said:

"One must be West of the Nueces or North of the mountains to see such a beautiful and interesting spectacle as a large drove of wild horses; for, within the settlement of Texas, they are not numerous, and are fast diminishing through the exertions of the inhabitants to enslave them for their benefit, or shoot them down for the hair of their mane and tail; pleading in excuse for the wantonness of their conduct, the safety of their tame horses, which are apt to be led astray by the gambols of the mustang."

"The buffalo is a good example of how quickly men can kill off the herds," Uncle Dan went on. "They used to just move on up to a herd and pick what they wanted and shoot them down. The others just stood around, just like they was waiting for them to shoot some more. Course a buffalo's just naturally a dumb critter, and they never learned, so the market-hunters shot 'em all. But the antelope and the deer, they learned, and when they learned, that's when it began to be sport."

"I still think it would be fun to get into some of that shootin' for a while."

"Naw, you don't. You just think that you think that. See, this is how it works. If you don't shoot no game except what you got to have to live on in a wild country, why the game don't get much excited. They're used to some of 'em getting killed by other animals and they kinda expect it. It's like everything else. There's plenty o' rabbits hereabouts, enough to feed the coyotes and dogs, and they don't go and get wild and hide away, or the coyotes would starve. Same thing about antelope and deer. The lions ate 'em right along, keepin' down the herds.

"Now, when the Indians was out here hunting, gettin' game was no trick, or he wouldn't a got much with a bow and

arrow, the way most Indians shot 'em. He killed game, all right, but he killed just what he needed to eat, and there warn't so many Indians. When we come along killin' for business, and then other fellers come along killin' for fun, that's when the stuff began to get scarce.

"You see, the Indians never killed for fun, because they had sense enough to know there wasn't much fun in killin' things. You had to walk or run or lay still in the mosquitoes and flies and gnats to get a shot. Then you had to skin and clean it, and carry the carcass back to camp, and that wasn't no fun neither. So they killed just what they needed, and the supply just rocked along. Them Indians was just as natural to the country as the buffalo and the deer and the coyotes.

"But nowadays . . . you put a gun in the hands of most fellers and they're gonna kill everything they see, so long's they got shells to shoot. And the game? Why it's gone like the buffalo and the passenger pigeon, or it's wised up, like the quail and the deer and the turkey and takes to the heavy brush where it's protected."

"How about fishing in the old days?"

"Well, out in the cow country where I spent a lotta time, there wasn't much fishing. Most cowhands never fished at all. Fact, they wouldn't eat a fish if you gave 'em one. Once in a while there was a cowhand, maybe like the chuckwagon boss of the outfit I was with when we was a-herdin' along the Pecos once. He had some lines and hooks along, and we fished most of the holes we come to.

"Well, sir, you oughta seen the fish we pulled out. You'd just drop your hook over the side of the river, with a frog on it, or maybe a grasshopper, or a chunk of liver, and soon's it hit bottom, a big bass or catfish takes holt and out he comes. All we had to do to get fish was to go down to the river and pull 'em out. We used a heavy line and when they took holt they was our meat, with no fight. But them bass weighin' five

and six pounds wasn't no more game to us than a yellor cat off the bottom, because they was there for the taking.

"We fished then just like we hunted. We went down and got somethin' to eat out of the river when we wanted it, and that was all. That's what you woulda done. But say . . . hold on there a minute . . . it seems to me you oughta know somethin' about just throwin' out a line and draggin' em in. Wasn't it you put me up to go down to that place on the Mexican coast, down to the pass, where there's fishin' today like there used to be up here in the old days?

"And fellers, it was just like Hart said, too. We stands out there in the water about knee-deep and throws plugs, red and yellow ones. Every time one hits the water a big weakfish or snook takes holt and goes prancin' round till he's landed and put on the stringer.

"That was fun for about twenty minutes, and I kept getting more and more fish on my stringer, and my arm got to hurtin', so when a fish hit it wasn't near as exciting and when a big fellow starts runnin' it just makes me tired, because it's a job to land 'im. So I tucks my rod under my arm and slides all the fish off the stringer and watches 'em swim away.

"Then I go over on the bank and sit there, watchin' the other fellers fish. They stuck at it longer, but I could see they was losin' interest and pretty soon nearly all of 'em comes in and lays down on the sand beside me. We lay there for quite a while, and one feller was still fishin' and we was just a-watchin' and pretty soon the feller alongside me says he believes the one out there ain't gettin' no more strikes. We perk up, and pretty soon we holler out and ask him. He says they've quit bitin'. So, dang my cats, if we don't all go right back out there again, and start fishin' thinkin' maybe if they was hard to catch we'd get more kick out catchin' em.

"And that's the way it is. I figure it's a game now, and you gotta play so's you can lose as well as win. It ain't no fun

gettin' out in the yard and shootin' marbles with a three-year-old kid cause you'll beat the socks off'n him every time, and it ain't no fun shootin' marbles with a twelve-year-old kid cause he'll whip your tail every time. You gotta have a chance to win—but just a chance—not a cinch, for it to be any fun.

"When some of these greenhorns come out snortin' about the grand old days, I kin see what they would be like runnin' wild. I kin see them a-killin' everything that swims, flies or walks till they couldn't shoot no more. Some of 'em would go right on shootin' till the last animal dropped dead. They're just natural murderers—not hogs, but murderers.

"But fellers like you, that's built like the average, and ain't no nicer nor no meaner than the next one, why maybe you'd shoot three or four bucks and call it quits. Then you'd get to sayin' to yourself, now what's the point of shootin' any more o'these. I know I can find 'em and hit 'em, just like I can kill cows. But there ain't no fun in it. . . .

"Say! Now, I recollect the time I was out roundin' up mustangs in West Texas, along the Pecos. It was a pretty lonely life a feller had to live then, and one day . . ."

That was music to our ears. We all settled down comfortably, relieved, our whetted story-appetites glowing with anticipation. The rest of the night belonged to Uncle Dan, and his Texas of long ago.

*B O O K   T W O*







## I

### PANORAMA

CONSIDER the cities of Texas.

*Dallas* is a buxom dowager, proud of her ultra-ultra commercial establishments, monuments to her perennial and enduring enterprise. For years *Dallas* has been the main market place for manufactured goods from the factories of the North and East. To her salon, the wares of Kansas City, St. Louis, Chicago, Boston, New York, were brought, to be displayed for the eyes of Texas. Here the East is still the East—people *dress* in *Dallas*, you are told. The West is still the West—ranchers, farmers, oilmen, in field clothes, adorn hotel lobbies. The twain have met and they have stayed met.

*Fort Worth* is a horny-handed cowhand. At *Fort Worth's* door, the *Star-Telegram* says in its masthead, the West begins. But that turns the idea upside down. At *Fort Worth*, the West terminates. It is the end of the trail for the cattle and sheep and hogs that pile into the stockyards, from the hills and the plains and the plateaus. At its freshest, the essence of *Fort Worth* is the fragrant perfume of clover. At other times, it may remind you of freshly butchered beef, the whinny of a mare, or the acrid aroma of an oil refinery. Whenever you say *Fort Worth*, you say Cattle. But whatever you say, be sure to smile. *Fort Worth* still packs a six-gun.

*San Antonio* is the faëry city of Texas. It is a place of charm, of personality, of grace, all things to all men and to

all women. San Antonio is the most captivating when made up as a gay señorita, her favorite role, with flaring skirts and comb and mantilla, and clicking heels, a rose above one ear. As you look closer you marvel at how well she carries her years. She is proud of her age as others are of their youth. When she gets her face lifted it is with the aim of appearing venerable rather than seductive. Historic, graceful, romantic, a quaint and curious volume of never-to-be-forgotten lore.

*Houston* is a lusty, young, healthy, swaggering to-hell-with-the-rest-of-you wench. Cornfed she might have been, if it were not that her main diet is cotton and petroleum. Kid Petroleum (Call me Pete) is her man, and he sure ain't done her wrong. He's built her port, and he's built her fine big buildings to live in, and to work in, and to play in. King Cotton was her main boyfriend till Pete struck it rich, but King Cotton became an old fuddyduddy. A flapper city, a get-rich-quick jitterbug, carhop for all of Texas. Look out, Atlanta! Look out, New Orleans! Just watch my smoke!

*Galveston* is the Old Lady of the Sea, wrinkled, and pickled in brine. Brine is a great preservative, though, and it keeps her ever young. She can hoist a schooner with the best of them, and she can give the floor an awful shellacking when the phonograph goes into the Beer Barrel Polka. She ain't been quite the same since the Big Storm. That wouldn't have been so bad, though. What really gave her a setback was that young huzzy Houston growing up and beating her time.

*El Paso* is an ex-ranger, who did his stuff when a ranger was really a-rangin' and fighting Indians and badmen. El Paso still wears a ten-gallon hat and cowboy boots, and jingles silver dollars in his jeans. He's got a little ranch now, and an interest in a mine, and a bit of land set out in long-staple cotton. There's the blood of adventure in his veins, and most of his folks live in New Mexico, Arizona, Nevada, Wyoming,

Montana. As far as he's concerned, the lads in the East Texas piney woods are just as rank outlanders as the Yankees.

*Amarillo* is a very mannish middle-aged lady from Kansas, and she suffers from gas pains. Her heels are flat, and so is her chest. But she's tall and rangy, has a solid bone structure and limber muscles, and eyes that can see over great distances. She grew fast and has had to crowd a lot of stuff into a short time. She had hardly any youth at all, was a mother at sixteen, a grandmother at thirty-five, a great-grandmother at fifty. Her skin is leathery from the whip of the Panhandle dust storm, and the sharp changes from hot to cold and back again.

*Wichita Falls* is an Oklahoma roughneck, with a trace of Indian blood in his make-up. He's a hard-working, hard-drinking, hard-fighting, kinda mean, fast-loving son-of-an-oil tank. He doesn't work quite so hard now as he used to, because the boom has died down. He remembers when hands were so scarce the bosses used to meet the trains and fight for any man who wanted a job. Boy, oh, boy, what wages! But it's all been spent, fizzled away. Lately he's been thinkin' maybe he'll look into one of them government resettlement farms; might be somethin' there.

*Waco* is a very pious-looking, self-righteous, reserved gentleman in a black frock-coat, string necktie and batwing collar. He's a farmer on week-days and a preacher on Sundays—a hell-fire, devil-drubbing preacher, and a hard, dirt-farmer who thinks only farmers work and the rest of the world is made up of parasites. He's been called a hick contemptuously. When the Ku Klux Klan flared in the early nineteen twenties, the organizers called the farmers hicks, but flatteringly. The Klan made it a badge of honor, a rallying cry which said that the hicks had been stepped on long enough and it was time that they got the upper hand. He quit paying dues to the Klan, but he's never actually resigned from it. He doesn't believe in the Klan itself so much any more since

some of the leaders showed they were just plain and fancy crooks. But he believes there ought to be something like it to keep the Furriners and Papists and Niggers and Jewbabies in line. He believes in Prohibition, national, even world Prohibition, but he also likes to swig a little red-eye now and then on the side. His favorite joke is, in a way, on himself. It's about how to get rid of Johnson grass, the furiously fast-growing weed. To do it, he says slyly, sprinkle the Johnson grass with corn whisky, and then turn a couple of preachers loose in the field.

*Beaumont—Port Arthur—Orange* are Cajin triplets. They grow rice, dig oil, cut timber, trap animals, sail ships. They are Texas kids, technically, but they feel more at home with Aunt New Orleans than with Mother Austin. Their home is where the Deep South laps over into Texas—East Texas, where you see most of the Negroes of the state, just as most of the Mexicans are to south and west. When the triplets ain't working or sitting in the grandstand at the ball game or shooting pool, they might be in the hotel lobbies. There, with maps sticking out of their pockets, and maybe one rolled out on a table, they might be peddling a sure thing, not such a fur piece from a producing well.

*Corpus Christi* is a scared and excited small-town girl, suffering with growing pains. Just a kid a day or two ago, a kid who's been a kid for a long time, now she's blooming into womanhood. When she shows her still bony shanks she knows it means something, and expects the attention she gets. The same guy that brought the roses to Houston's cheeks is making Corpus feel her oats. That boy Petroleum (Call me Pete) sure gets around a lot, and he's always buckin' up against Old King Cotton. There's no use talking—what it takes, that boy Pete's sure got.

*Austin* is the Ma of Texas, a 254-county Ma, who can suckle or spank according to the mood or need. She's like a

great funnel into which all things pour from all over the state. Then the funnel is suddenly inverted and becomes a cornucopia, whence come many blessings for various parts of the state. Again she may remind you of a womb, just the physical machinery of reproduction without any of the higher emotions. It is a prolific and well-nourished womb, that takes from each in the form of taxes, and reproduces in the form of allocations and appropriations and salaries for many and varied sons and daughters of Texas. Capital Austin can give or withhold the state teats usually. But she's a female, and she's human, so she's subject to seductions occasionally. Austin knows her strength. She knows she's got the center of law-making, all the state political machinery, and the center of higher learning, the state university. Whomsoever she meets, and wherever she goes, Austin never forgets her power. And not so very far from where talk about the most advanced legislation bounces around the senate walls there live some of the most primitive people in the United States—the famous Charcoal Burners.

And so it goes—the trail of individual personalities from one Texas city to another, one section to another. This infinite variety is one thing that helps set the state off from others. No monotonous repetition about these cities, such as you might find in other parts of the country. Each is a different and thrilling experience, or a boring one, depending upon how well you know your city, and what you may be seeking.

Another thing that makes this state different is the thin borderline between Texas urban and rural life. This may be due in a large measure to its prodigious size. In other states whose populations run into several millions, there is, more often than not, a sharp division between the city and country folk, their habits, their outlook, their dress, and even their way of talking. Probably New York State and New York

City offer the best examples. The Manhattanite, the Brooklynite, the Bronxite, inhabit different worlds from those of the people in upstate New York, and in the smaller communities nearer the metropolis.

In Texas, you are as likely to find as many yokels within the metes and bounds of the larger cities as beyond the city limits. And, conversely, you are as likely to find an urban sophisticated, man-of-the-world living and working in some jerkwater town as in an office or a club in the city. Texas has some commuters, also, but they are another tribe.

The urbanized rural resident may be a lawyer, a doctor, a businessman, a rancher, a landowner who rents out his farms. His sphere of activity is that region where he lives. Yet his approach, his attitude, his general outlook, would make him at home in any of our metropolitan centers. He is an intellectual match for those residents of certain cities who like to feel that somehow they are more civilized—that they have got a peep through a little better knothole into the world's serious business and its fun. Without knowing more about him, they might look on this man as a hick. Yet he reads the same magazines, the same books, takes in the same movies, picks the same radio programs as the city American.

The great fluidity of the Texas population has been checked somewhat by WPA and Relief restrictions. You can still find, however, any number of families—besides migratory fruit or cotton pickers—who, during the last twenty-five years, have been residents of at least a half-dozen counties. They have lived just as long in one of the big cities—Houston, Dallas, San Antonio—as in a smaller town, or in an oil camp or a ranch-country trading post. Their breadwinners may be office workers, skilled laborers, merchants, lawyers, doctors, or engineers. Unless they undergo drastic economic changes, for better or for worse, these people do not alter their mode of living much.

The result is that the hick is gradually ceasing to be a hick. You cannot tell him by his clothes. There are old-timers, and many new-timers, in the cities—in hotels, restaurants, courthouses—who just don't give a damn about dressing conventionally. That well-dressed fellow you see, clad in the latest fashion, neat, slick and snazzy, is probably a lad who drives a laundry truck in a little town thirty or forty miles away. Sometimes there is a little more difference in the appearance of the women. But it is still hard to tell whether those dames in slacks are from the boulevard or the fork of the creek. Maybe you can spot them in New York, where any outlander is likely to appear a hick. In Texas, however, the hick and the dude are rapidly becoming brothers and sisters, not only under the skin, but over it as well.

There is still plenty of rural life in Texas, the good old-fashioned kind, in manners and in morals, and in the daily routine of trying to earn a farm living. Perhaps the answer is that the cities are still comparatively young, and that they have not yet really become psychologically urbanized. In simpler words, a lot of the boys have been taken out of the country, but the country has not yet been taken out of them. Maybe most of the Texas cities are really just overgrown country towns, and the families—even to the fourth or sixth or fenth generations—that have grown with them, still are, at heart, country boys and girls.

It all adds up to the same thing—either the city is still countrified or the country is getting citified. The difference between the two, in either case, gets narrower. You are just as likely to find a boy in a Texas city who knows that milk comes from cows as a boy in the country who can at a glance identify any make and model of automobile or airplane. Again—the same textbooks, movies, radio programs, comic strips. It becomes more and more difficult to tell where folklore ends and manufactured lore begins, or vice versa. Manu-

factured lore—including that of schools and textbooks—seems much more potent than the other. Few young city people yearn for the farm and the simple life. But the woods—and the business colleges—are full of farm boys and girls who will strain a gut, and other things, for a twelve-dollar-a-week white-collar job.

In trying to learn something about the people of Texas, it is helpful to note the things they work at, how they play, what they wear, what they eat, what they read, what they write, what they talk about, what they do to one another, and what makes Texans laugh.



## II

### CLOSE-UP ONE

ON THE morning of April 21, 1939, just before noon, a short man in shirtsleeves, hatless, walked down the long hallway on the second floor of a small hotel in San Antonio, Texas. In each hand he carried a suitcase. One seemed to be much heavier than the other, weighting his body sideways in a slight curve to the right. But what distinguished the man more than his stature or his raiment, was a beard—straggly gray whiskers and mustache, hiding most of his face, leaving only his forehead, his eyes and his nose exposed, like desert islands in a murky sea. His large aquiline nose rose from the mass like a marine promontory. His eyes were coral reefs, his forehead a flat stretch of tawny sand. The thick growth of hair on his head was also graying.

The man stopped just before he reached the head of the steps, and set the suitcases down on the floor. Apparently he intended to switch, to carry the heavier one on the other side for a while. The spot where he came to a halt was directly opposite the partially opened doorway of one of the rooms. He relaxed for a moment, let his arms extend, turned his head about, stretching his neck.

As he stooped to pick up the suitcases, two young men dashed from the room, through the open doorway, toward the bearded man. The youths were dressed in bright yellow, long-

trousered uniforms, trimmed in purple braid. Over the coats they wore Sam Browne belts. On the shoulders were shiny, patent-leather epaulettes. The tall crowns of their military caps were purple, with gold-colored ornaments and with short black visors.

The two seized the old man, one by each arm, from behind, and pushed him vigorously forward. Before he realized what had happened, the man was headed down the steps, propelled on each side by the two muscular youths, each of whom gripped one arm with both hands. As they plunged downward to the lobby, the old man uttered a nervous, throaty screech.

Meanwhile, three young girls, also in uniform, emerged from the room with the open door. They came to a stop at the head of the steps, grouped around the two suitcases which remained, like a couple of stranded boats, on the hallway floor, parallel to the walls. The girls said nothing. They just stood there, watching the two young men pushing the old man down the steps. . . .

In order to be clear about what followed, it may be necessary first to understand something of the significance of April 21 in the life of San Antonio and of Texas. That memorable date is a legal holiday, known as San Jacinto Day, the anniversary of the battle fought where the San Jacinto River meets the Buffalo Bayou. In that engagement, an army of Texans, led by Sam Houston, defeated an army of Mexicans led by Santa Anna. About seven hundred Mexicans were killed in the battle, and only nine Texans. It was the decisive encounter of the war that led to the independence of Texas.

Every year, during the week in which April 21 falls, San Antonio celebrates the occasion with the Fiesta de San Jacinto. High spot of Fiesta Week is the big parade on San Jacinto Day, a parade known as the Battle of Flowers.

The parade was to take place as usual in the afternoon,

but long before that time, since early in the morning, the bands had been marching around the city in separate units, rehearsing for the procession. Some of them had their instruments and played on the practice march. Other groups just marched, going through their military routine without music. Still others just strolled around the city in groups of two and three and four, brisk young men and smartly-uniformed young girls. Some of the girls' uniforms consisted of coat and skirt. Others wore coat and trousers and short boots.

Many a San Antonian and out-of-town visitor had a stiff neck that morning, turning to stare at the plump firm buttocks that bulged red or blue or purple or yellow or green in a healthy swagger down the street. Wherever you went in San Antonio on the morning of April 21, you ran into people in some kind of uniform, and most of the uniforms had a definitely military cast about them. There was a stir in the air like the hour preceding a battle—the uniforms, the braid, the martial music of the rehearsing bands, marching to and fro. . . .

. . . Two uniforms pushed gray whiskers toward the desk in the hotel lobby. . . .

The hotel was full of uniforms. With one or two exceptions, all the guests in the hotel were uniformed.

"When did this man register?" one of the uniforms demanded of the clerk.

The clerk looked at his records.

"Last night."

"See," said the uniform, "and you said you came in this morning."

"But I did," the old man replied in very broken English, as if the words were lost for a while somewhere in the whiskers, "I tell you it was three o'clock in the morning."

"We don't mark the time of arrival," the clerk said. "If the man came at nine last night or three this morning, he

would be marked up as of last night. That's the way we figure our bills. If he took the room at three A. M. that would count as a full night, and full day, until our checking-out deadline, six in the afternoon."

"Let's go to the bus station across the street," the whiskers pleaded. "Maybe the ticket agent will remember me."

By this time, the hotel was in a state of panic. Uniforms rushed in from every direction, from the dining room, down the steps, from the walk outside. The two youths had turned the man loose, but they stood close to him. About fifteen other youths, all in uniform, surrounded the trio.

Without waiting for a reply to his request, the old man bolted for the door that led to the street. The wedge of uniforms followed right along with him as if they were part of him, fanned out and trailing, like a peacock's tail, and with fully as many colors. Everybody was shouting and jabbering.

"Don't let him get away!"

"Watch him!"

"It's a trick!"

"Get a cop!"

Like a rainbow-colored centipede now, the wedge of uniforms streaked across the street to the bus station.

Girls in uniform remained in the hotel, milling around, talking excitedly.

"But are they sure?" one asked.

Some of the girls were getting hysterical. Several broke into tears. On a lawn swing, one little girl was sobbing, frightened over the possibility that the boys—and they were a husky lot—were going to hurt the old man.

Another girl consoled the weeper on the swing.

"Never mind now," she said. "Nothing will happen to him. If he's the one they'll turn him over to a policeman. If not, they'll let him go."

But the girl was not consoled.

"I thought sure he was my grandfather at first," she went on. "He looks exactly like him. Oh, I hope they don't harm that poor old man, no matter what he did. I'm scared, Chrissie; it's just like the newsreel we saw last night. Remember?"

In the bus station, the wedge of color whizzed past the benches, right up to the ticket counter. The young men were grumbling and cursing. It turned out that the agent who had been on duty early in the morning had now gone home. The uniformed youths grew menacing. One of them grabbed the old man by the back of the neck and began shoving him toward the street by poking his knee against the old man's rump. A long arm reached over and a hand yanked at the beard. The old man turned, and made some gurgling sounds that did not form words.

Outside, they stopped alongside a lamp post at the curb. Others in the street gathered round. The uniforms were getting impatient. One of them shoved the old man toward another uniform. The latter shoved him back. This went on for a few moments. Whiskers was now a pushball, and the manhandling really terrified him. His bleary eyes popped with fright. He stared wildly at one uniform and then another, towering over him. His eyes ranged from one Sam Browne belt to the next. One of the uniforms shoved him hard, against the lamp post.

Apparently in some real and immediate danger now, the old man screamed. He raised both arms upward toward the sky, palms open, and muttered what sounded like a prayer. One of the youths yanked the man's shirt tail out. The old man wheeled, then he seized his head in his hands and swayed forward, downward, bending at the waist, then up again, then down, up, down, up, down, and from his throat there rose a wailing, a chant of terror, growing louder and louder and faster and faster:

"Ah-yigh, yigh, yigh! Ah vigh! Ah-vigh, ah-vigh! Ah-yigh, yigh!"

A policeman broke through the crowd.

"What's going on?"

The uniform closest to the old man, the ringleader of the wedge, started talking:

"We got to town yesterday at noon and went to the hotel . . ."

The policeman interrupted.

"H'm, son, been drinking, eh? You smell like a distillery. Now come to the point. What's going on?"

As the youth started again, the old man began talking at the same time.

"Shut up, you!" the cop shouted. "Wait till he gets through."

"He's a peeping tom," the uniformed youth blurted. "We caught him. Some of the girls in the band stayed up all night on account of it, scared to death."

"It is not true, officer. I wasn't here last night," the whiskers protested.

"Did you see him peeping? Is that where you caught him?"

"No, sir, we caught him when he was going to try it again this morning. He stopped in front of the girls' door."

"But I was going out. I had my suitcases."

"Come on, let's go to the station. Not all of you. Just a couple. And get two or three of the girls."

At the corner, after the patrol wagon had gone, two of the uniformed lads were reviewing what had happened.

One of them laughed aloud:

"Boy, did you hear those funny noises he made? Like some kind of an animal. And, say, those whiskers, jeez, he had 'em all over his face. What was he, anyhow? A Polack or a Jew or what?"

On the lawn swing at the hotel, the girl with the grandfather still sobbed, thinking perhaps of the newsreel: close-up of hobnailed boots stomping on wrinkled old hands that pushed scrub-brushes over a smeared sidewalk.

All this happened in San Antonio, city of the Alamo, cradle of Texas liberty, on the morning of April 21, 1939. I saw most of it as I got off the bus to join in celebrating San Jacinto Day. Later I checked with the police on the old man. He was identified by a bus driver as a passenger en route from Corpus Christi at the time of the supposed peeping. There was a strong suspicion among some of the detectives that one of the boys might have been the peeper, and had pounced on the victim as a cover-up. But the matter was not pressed. No charges were filed. There was a little squib in the papers about it, amid long descriptions of the duchesses' robes and the queen's dress.

I recalled this incident vividly some months later when I read an Associated Press dispatch describing the storming of the city auditorium in San Antonio by a mob of several thousand. The dispatch said the mob had destroyed public property, battled police, on the pretext of preserving the Constitution against what a slight young woman might say to a hundred people or so gathered in the meeting. They called themselves Communists, the handful at the meeting. Those on the outside said they acted in the name of Americanism.

I thought, too, of the Alamo, where heroic Texans were stormed by a stronger Mexican army acting in the name of patriotism against a group of armed rebels. San Antonio, it occurred to me, seems to be blessed with a gift for making martyrs. There was nothing to connect the big mob at the auditorium with the smaller mob on the day of the Battle of Flowers, except that they both happened to perform in historic San Antonio.

*San An Tony, An To Neo,  
She hopped upon a pony,  
And rode away with Tony.  
If you see them, then  
Just let me know,  
And I'll meet them in  
San An Tony-O!*

San Antonio likes to be regarded as different from other cities in the country, as having a distinct personality, something that sets it off from the usual pattern of American urban centers. And it has. Among other things, the booklet and advertisement writers tell of the "old-world charm" of San Antonio. It has that, too, and an ultra-sophisticated outlook that comes to cities only after centuries of growth and mixing of cultures. Somehow, in a queer way, it helps to raise the one-time ranch center to the cultural status of Paris or Berlin or Rome or Mexico City, or even ancient Athens.

San Antonio is a neat example of the dual personality that invests a quaint old city. The dualism is revealed in many other ways. San Antonio, with a population of which nearly fifty per cent is of Mexican origin, is also bi-lingual, to a far greater degree than most other places in Texas with large Mexican communities. Almost anywhere in San Antonio you can hear Spanish and English being spoken side by side, and sometimes the two are mixed. Many stores have signs in their windows that say, "*Se Habla Español*," which means "Spanish is Spoken."

*Se habla* a lot of *Español*, too, in foul and fair weather, when revolutionaries get together. Somebody is always plotting a Mexican revolution in San Antonio. That also contributes to a comparison between San Antonio and Paris. Like the French capital, the Texas city is always full of intrigue and exiles from Latin American countries, principally Mexico.

The choice of San Antonio as a base for Mexican revolutions goes back to its earliest history, long before Texas declared its independence. Mexicans in San Antonio before 1810 were plotting to help the movement for independence from Spain. They were again plotting in 1820 when the adherents of republicanism had risen against the Royalist reaction in Mexico. Texans selected San Antonio as a key point in the revolt against Mexico, and that brought about the memorable Battle of the Alamo. And so on down through the past century into the present one.

San Antonio seethed with Mexican revolutionary activity when the Diaz dictatorship neared its termination. The Madero junta made its headquarters there. Ninety per cent of the exiles from Mexico during the twenty years following the overthrow of Diaz settled in San Antonio, some of them with plenty of funds. Many of them, however, were penniless, and lived in the most distressing poverty and misery. San Antonio, as the Catholic capital of the Southwest, later became the concentration point for church protests against the Mexican government. And today, in hidden places, in the more cloistered retreats, as well as in more open places like cafés and clubs and hotel lobbies, plotting goes on. In every group of plotters there is always an American or two, serving as contact for Anglo-Americans, or as publicity agent.

Bi-lingual, bi-racial, bi-national San Antonio is also bi-spatial and bi-temporal. San Antonio, again in greater degree than other Texan cities, derives its cultural patterns heavily from the Southwest, the Mexican border, as well as from the North and East. It is like a quick change artist who faces the audience with one costume and one make-up, then turns his back and in a flash has changed character completely. San Antonio will at one moment appear extremely northerner, very very New York or Chicago, with neon signs and ultra-modern building fronts and barking newsboys. A turn

around a corner, a pause at the river, and you find yourself in Old Mexico. The city government has taken cognizance of this fascinating dual personality. It ordered purchase and restoration of a group of old adobe structures known as *La Villita* or "the Spanish village." *La Villita* is situated in an old section of San Antonio, just in the shadow of San Antonio's tallest building.

Bi-temporal San Antonio reminds you of the old Janus-face, the familiar two-visaged head. One face of San Antonio's Janus looks back toward the founding of the city. The other looks toward the future, toward one of the fondest dreams of the Chamber of Commerce seers—the day when San Antonio will be the principal resort city of the Southwest, besides the most important military point in the United States. Somewhere between the two faces is the present. But there is no present in San Antonio. The proudest residents rarely talk about what they are now but about what they used to be, and what they are going to be.

What San Antonio used to be can be glimpsed from some of the old buildings, like the missions and the cathedral, reminders of one of Spain's northernmost colonial outposts on this continent. Amplifying the picture of the past are many legends of the early mission, Indian, and trail-driver days.

Some of the early settlers were classed as deadbeats back where they came from, but there was also another way of looking at it. They were hard-working folk back home, who had got into the clutches of moneylenders and mortgagers. They saw the fruits of all their toil and sweat channeled toward the bankers, saw no possibility of ever getting into the clear. So they were "long gone" for Texas. There they could start from scratch. What they farmed and built would be their own, even if only the walls and roof and the crude furnishings of a log-cabin.

But San Antonio did not start with these familiar Anglo-American-Saxons, these "first families" who established the Austin colony, or who trickled across the border without official arrangements. San Antonio was founded formally in 1718 when the Spanish government established a mission—San Antonio de Valero at San Pedro Springs. The Spaniards concentrated on making San Antonio the northeastern focus of their culture, commerce, and civilization. Three more missions, still standing today in "restored" glory, were built. Their influence has been tremendous. They have served to give San Antonio a tie with the remote past. Furthermore, they provide inspiration for much of the architecture of the city, much as the California missions influenced building there.

The colonial epoch in San Antonio left a heritage of legend and fable. In much of it, Pagan and Christian lore were combined and transformed. We hear, for instance, about something known in church teaching as "bi-location." This is a power with which some individuals are reputedly endowed, enabling them to be in more than one place at the same time. It appears in the stories of a remarkable personage known as Maria Coronel de Agreda.

She lived in Spain, and had never actually been in the New World, that is, had never taken a boat over, the only way ordinary mortals could get there. But she had made many visits by means of her special powers of bi-location. She went to the New World as an apparition. It is related that she knew intimately all the details about the Indians in and around San Antonio and Texas, and that they had apparently seen her, too. She knew about these people before any Spaniards reached the Indians. It is said that Sister Maria Coronel de Agreda made about five hundred visitations to Texas.

Some of the lore has identified her with the Mysterious Woman in Blue, of whom the Indians told. The Spanish ex-

plorers were supposed to have found things exactly as Sister Maria predicted. Father Manzanet reported that the Indians told him that they worshipped a Woman in Blue who had been visiting them for a long time. She had told them that the White Men were coming, that they were friends—teachers and healers—and that is why the Indians were not hostile.

The garments around the Virgin of Guadalupe, patroness-saint of Mexico, are also blue. The apparition of the brunette Virgin supposedly took place soon after the arrival of the Conquistadores in Mexico City, when the serious business of "reducing" the Indians had begun in earnest. It antedated the Mysterious Woman and Sister Maria Coronel de Agreda about two centuries.

Every old house in San Antonio has its story of mystery and romance, and its legends of buried treasure. There are houses whose occupants nobody ever sees, whose windows remain closed, shutters locked, and about which there is no sign of life. There may be an old maid, the survivor of an ancient family, in that house. And, sh-h-h, somewhere in that beautiful garden there is gold buried. Here is another house, the yard of which has been dug up over and over again by two generations. It seems that grandfather, in his will, mentioned buried gold, and attached to that document a map showing just where it was in relation to the old well. The third generation is just growing up, and it is on the way down to the cellar to get the shovels.

San Antonio, on San Jacinto Day, will naturally take you back to the old days, the days of the Texas heroes who fought for independence from Mexico. Among these, even the ones considered as "Texians" were really newcomers, compared to the Spanish and Mexican residents of the Rio Grande country and the San Antonio mission settlements. The first "legitimate" Texians were those in the first Austin colony, the famous "Three Hundred Families." When the Texians

decided that they could no longer submit to injustices inflicted by a tyrannical government in a distant city, they were joined by volunteers from the United States. Some were volunteers and many were "volunteers," well-armed and well-financed companies—organized, in some cases, by men who saw a big future in land speculation down Texas way. One historian describes a lone Kentucky rifleman racing across the country. Asked where he was going in such a big hurry, he answered:

"Going to Texas to fight for my freedom."

Even the Texas flag, the Lone Star flag, was not a Texas idea. In November, 1835, a mass meeting took place in Macon, Georgia. It was called to discuss aid for the Texans in their struggle against Mexico. More than three thousand dollars in cash was raised and plans were made for organizing a company of volunteers. One hundred and fifty Georgians enlisted in the company, under command of Colonel Fannin, later to become immortal in the massacre at Goliad.

Johanna Troutman, inspired by the Texas cause, sacrificed a beautiful silk skirt. She converted it into a flag, on which she sewed a large azure star, a Lone Star, since that time the political symbol of Texas. Over the star, she placed the words, "Liberty or Death." Below it was the Latin inscription, *Ubi Libertas Habitat Ibi Patria*—"Where Liberty dwells, there is my country." The flag designed by Miss Troutman was presented to the company of Georgians. At Velasco, Texas, on January 8, 1836, they raised the first Lone Star flag. After Texas had won independence, the government of the Republic honored the designer of the flag by presenting her with a spoon and a fork, of solid silver, that had belonged to Santa Anna, the defeated Mexican general. Later, the state of Texas further paid homage to the memory of Miss Troutman by arranging to move her body from Georgia to the Texas state cemetery in Austin. Her remains

now rest in a place of honor, close to those of Stephen F. Austin, "The Father of Texas."

Santa Anna is usually portrayed as representative of Mexico. Yet thousands of Mexicans—led by men who have become immortalized as great Mexican patriots—were fighting Santa Anna as bitterly as any Texan ever did. The impression is too often given that Santa Anna was Mexico, and that therefore all Mexicans should be hated. Rarely is it made sufficiently clear that the Texans did not fight the Mexicans because the latter represented a "foreign" government, but because that government was an oppressive one. If the Texans had felt the same way about a government headed by Anglo-Saxons they probably would have done the same thing.

A stroll through the streets of San Antonio will take you to the various plazas, and inevitably to the one known as the Military Plaza, in the center of which is the city hall. Across the street from this municipal building is the Governor's palace, reputedly the seat of government during the period of Spanish domination.

A full-length bronze statue of Moses Austin, father of Stephen F. Austin, has been erected on the lawn of the city hall, facing the Governor's palace. Moses Austin, who did much of his negotiating in San Antonio, initiated the colonization plan, but died before it got under way. His son carried on the work.

Across the plaza from the Austin statue is the old San Fernando Cathedral. It is a reminder that Austin's colonists had to swear not only allegiance to the Mexican government—but also to become Catholics. No other religion was tolerated in Texas, or anywhere under the Mexican flag, at that time. American frontiersmen—jealous of their personal and religious freedom—accepted these conditions for the privilege of clearing a wilderness, fighting Indians, and tilling the soil.

Perusal of some of Austin's letters leads to the conclusion

that colonists really must have reached a point of desperation to join him in the Texas venture. Austin gave them no high-powered sales talk about a land flowing with milk and honey. He made it super-clear that there was hard work ahead, but that there was an even chance that the work would yield a fair reward. Austin made no appeal to riff-raff and adventurers. This element had drifted in during the forty or fifty years preceding the arrival of Austin's first families. They reached Texas singly and in groups, on waves of filibustering and fortune-hunting that swept unharnessed souls from the spreading boundaries of the United States and its centralizing government—swept them toward the open plain and the open sea. There, things were free for the taking. Every man was as good as the next and maybe a damn-sight better, and each man had the same chance as the next—if he was equally armed. It was this period in which the famous old tribute to the inventor of the pistol acquired its full meaning:

“He made all men the same size.”

In one letter Austin wrote of the kind of people he did *not* want:

“Those . . . who are established in comfort and competency with an ordinary portion of domestic happiness; who have never been far from home, and are excessively attached to personal ease; who shrink from hardship and danger, and those who, being accustomed to a regular routine of prescribed employment in a city, know not how to act on emergencies, or adapt themselves to all sorts of circumstances, had better stay where they are. . . .”

And of the kind he wanted:

“He whose hopes of rising to independence in life, by honorable exertion, have been blasted by disappointment; whose ambition has been thwarted by untoward circumstances; whose spirit, though depressed, is not discouraged; who longs only for some ample field on which to lay his

strength; who does not hanker after society nor sigh for the vanished illusions of life; who has a fund of resources within himself, and a heart to trust in God and his own exertions; who is not peculiarly sensitive to petty inconvenience, but can bear privations and make sacrifices of personal comfort—such a person will do well to settle accounts at home, and begin life anew in Texas.”

What he expected the Mexican government to provide the colonists is disclosed in a letter written by Austin to Baron de Bastrop, his go-between in negotiating the colony concession:

“. . . they are now looking to the government of the state as to a father who will interpose its parental authority to save them and their wives from the cruel and merciless persecution of unfeeling creditors who may follow them from the United States. I am not in favor of extending too much protection to any who have defrauded their creditors, but it appears to me that sound policy and the dictates of Justice and Humanity certainly would justify affording the most ample protection to every honest but unfortunate debtor whose hard fate elsewhere had driven him to seek an asylum in the Mexican Republic.”

So the colonists came, and they cleared the land, and they built houses, and planted crops. They fought Indians and bandits, began getting involved—as the Mexicans were—in the struggle between the liberal and reactionary groups. The Texans were sympathetic to the side seeking establishment of a Republic, against the monarchists. The rebellious spirit of the Texans was amply prodded from the big country to the north and east. Their increasing demands for what they regarded as elementary economic and political justice soon drew the fire of the reactionary oligarchy. To teach the Texans as well as other Mexican citizens the folly of rebellion, Santa Anna set out on an expedition of extermination.

His bloody march led Santa Anna eventually to the Alamo. If the Texans had destroyed the Alamo and retreated, as General Sam Houston advised, and had thus averted the ruthless attack ordered by Santa Anna, San Antonio might never have become the "Alamo City." This short and euphonious word—alamo—is also the Spanish name of the cottonwood tree. It has contributed immeasurably to the preservation of much historical detail, to the composition of poems and songs, to inspiration for artists. And it has served, too, as a last resort for advertising writers, and as a fountain of perpetual youth for reactionary chauvinism.

The Alamo has become one of San Antonio's greatest assets in its drive for tourist trade. There is a good bit of irony in events of less than two score years ago. The most aggressive go-getters of that day put up a determined fight to raze the old mission and fortress. Today it is priceless. They wanted to make room for a big tourist hotel and an amusement palace, for which many cities would have gladly sacrificed their charters. The city officials then felt almost that way about it, too, and were ready to do their bit for Progress. The ramrod of the scheme was a syndicate of eastern investors. Their efforts provoked what has become known as the Second Battle of the Alamo.

The spirit of Old San Antonio, which ruled during the Second Battle, might be described by a quotation from the writings of Adina de Zavala, who has been called the Savior of the Alamo, the Angel of the Alamo, and the Sweetheart of the Alamo. Miss de Zavala says:

"The greatest heritage of the children of Texas and America is the noble example of its great men and heroes. Let us not forget their deathless deeds, for the moment we begin to ignore the sublime virtues exemplified by the noble souls of our race, our degeneration has begun."

The battle over the Alamo took on a second phase in a

dispute between a group led by Miss de Zavala and a group headed by Miss Clara Driscoll. The latter was referred to, in the newspapers of that day, as the "Queen of the Alamo."

The Alamo was property of the Catholic Church. In 1847, the United States Army took possession and used it as an arsenal and storehouse. The army recognized that it was a tenant of the church and paid rent. During the Civil War, the building was similarly occupied by the Confederates.

The Catholic Church in 1879 sold its interest in the Alamo property, with exception of the Alamo church building, to H. Grenet, for \$20,000. In 1883, the Alamo church was sold to the state of Texas for a like amount. After Grenet died, his property was sold at auction to Charles Hugo, Gustav Schmeltzer and William Heuermann, for \$28,000. The Daughters of the Texas Republic later bought the property for \$75,000 with the timely financial assistance of Miss Clara Driscoll.

Meanwhile, a St. Louis hotel syndicate had purchased adjoining property and began a drive to tear down the Alamo. Describing it as "an unsightly building which has long been an eyesore," the syndicate offered to pay for razing the Alamo and for landscaping a park. This was defeated, and in 1913 another syndicate, with help of city officials, tried to capture the Alamo to build an amusement palace. This syndicate was way out of line, because the property had long before been bought with state aid.

The syndicate went so far as to raze most of the upper story of the historic building. When Miss de Zavala learned of the scheme to destroy it, she took possession, hired three men as guards and barred herself inside the building. Her guards were ousted bodily, but she remained and halted the ravages of the amusement palace promoters by winning public sympathy. And that is why she became known as the Savior of the Alamo. The next phase of the battle involved the restora-

tion of the building, and it was here that the Daughters were divided and the matter got into state politics.

The battle cry of the Texas army in the war for independence—Remember the Alamo—underwent a genuine resurrection in the second battle. There seemed to be a moment, on the brink of a new era of progress and prosperity, when Dame San Antonio was about to consign to oblivion the heroic memories of those stirring days. But the new battle revived her early love, sent her scurrying into trunks and boxes in the attic of history, to dig out faded love letters and papers, documents and photographs. The lore, the fables, the legends of the Alamo were brought out again, to re-inspire a materialistic generation. This fight to save the Alamo turned out to be good business, for the Alamo has proved much more lasting as an economic asset than an amusement palace could. It also put people to work to save the stories about the old mission-fortress.

Stories are told, for instance, of secret and mysterious passages and tunnels that led from the Alamo across what is now residential San Antonio. These tunnels are full of all kinds of treasures, old chests, cannons stuffed with gold, boxes of jewels. One story involves a little girl who wandered into the passage and got lost. While she was there, the Mysterious Woman in Blue appeared and helped her emerge with a box of gold and silver and pearl ornaments. The tunnel was supposedly also known to Indians, and they, too, stored up a lot of gold in it, brought to San Antonio from their secret mines. Many of these mines have long been lost, although White Men have looked hard for them, and still continue to hunt to this very day. Ghosts roam all over the old buildings, the Alamo, and the missions, and the graveyards.

But the Alamo has also been abused. To what extent, one is led to wonder, can you take an object, supposed to inspire respect, and even reverence, grind it into the grist of every

commercial and political mill, and still keep its dignity preserved? There has not been any taboo on the use of the Alamo in advertisements and for names of business firms. There are Alamo groceries, Alamo banks, Alamo meat markets, Alamo shine parlors, Alamo soft drink stands. Most of them use the familiar façade of the old mission as part of the tradename.

How this situation, which has become quite ordinary to the residents of San Antonio, can strike the visitor as a bit humorous, was related by one very acute observer who visited Texas in the eighties. He was a newspaper reporter named Alexander Sweet, and his impressions are recorded in a volume entitled, *On a Mexican Mustang through Texas*. The "Mexican mustang," by the way, is a burro. What Sweet said is worth repeating because it helps in understanding how large the Alamo has always been in the picture of San Antonio. I give you Mr. Sweet:

"From the time that we arrived in San Antonio until the time we left, we were continually being surprised by strange and un-American sights. The city, with its narrow streets and queer buildings, is much more like a provincial town in France or Spain than like our rectangular American cities. The Menger Hotel has a large courtyard inside the building. This yard is about a hundred feet square, is flagged with large, flat stones, has trees growing in it and a stream of water flowing through it. . . . I . . . lay awake for hours listening to the mocking bird whistling in a fig-tree at my window. I felt as if the United States must be a long way off.

"San Antonio is called the Alamo City, or City of the Alamo. The inhabitants are very proud of the Alamo. They consider it a sacred duty to let the stranger know that he is in the city of the Alamo, and ought to be grateful that there is such a place to come to. The first thing that I noticed, when I stepped out at the side door of the hotel in the morning, was

an ice-wagon. I noticed it because the street was not wide enough for both of us, and the wheels took a chip off my leg. 'Alamo Ice Company' was painted on the side of the wagon. I walked across the plaza to the Alamo Drug Store to get some arnica. An aged gentleman sitting in front of the store seemed to take a great deal of interest in my misfortune, and recommended a bottle of Alamo Liniment—a medicine patented by the proprietor of the drug store. The aged gentleman, knowing I was a stranger, volunteered a vast amount of information. 'This is the Alamo Plaza,' he said, 'and that square building in the center of the plaza is the Alamo Meat Market.'

"From where I stood I could see the Alamo Livery Stable, the Alamo Cigar Store, the Alamo Tin Shop. I was told that around the corner I could find the Alamo Bakery and the Alamo Brewery, the engine house of the Alamo Fire Company, and the rooms of the Alamo Literary Society. The aged gentleman said there was some talk of building an Alamo monument, that the name and fame of the historic spot might be kept before the people; and I could not detect any sarcasm in the tone of his voice when he said it. I said that I was anxious to see the sacred premises—the cradle in which Texas liberty was first rocked. The aged gentleman said he would take pleasure in showing it to me. We walked across the plaza, and around the market-house.

" 'There, sir, is the old church of the Alamo!' and the aged gentleman anchored himself to the pavement with his cane, swelled out his chest, and pointed proudly across the way.

" 'What! That flat-roofed building with the tree in front of it?'

" 'No, no! That is the Alamo saloon—a point of interest that we shall visit presently.'

" 'Ah! Now I see—the structure with the striped hitching-post in front. Quaint old building, very!'

" 'Pshaw, no! That's the Alamo Tonsorial Arena, as they

call it, where you can get shaved, and have your hair amputated, for four bits. Look to the left of that—right over there.'

"Now I see the original godfather of all these bits of scenery he has been pointing out. It is a low, massive structure, with an arched doorway, over which the Spanish coat-of-arms, the date 1745, and other carved work, are discernible. Four arched niches in the wall, intended for images of saints, also adorn the front.

"Until a short time before I saw the Alamo, it had been used by the United States government as a quartermaster's depot where old saddles, tobacco, blankets for Indians, and other munitions of frontier war, were stored. At the time of my visit, the building was used by a prominent San Antonio merchant as a warehouse in which he stored groceries and vegetables. . . .

"I had read a great many newspaper articles, as well as histories and books, that had been written about the Battle of the Alamo, and was therefore a little mixed on the subject, although I recognized some of the historic spots at once. Here, to the left, was the spot where Travis fell dead, bayoneted beside the gun that he had used with such deadly effect on the advancing Mexican host. Again, in the next room, I recognized the place where he breathed his last, with a smile of triumph on his brow, a bullet in his brain, and a Mexican officer of high rank impaled on his sword. Moreover, with the assistance of the aged gentleman, I found the place where the *porte-cochère* had been, and in front of which, when the massacre was almost ended, General Castillo begged Santa Anna to spare the life of Travis, as he stood defiantly in the narrow entrance, with his shattered sword in his hand, received a charge of musketry, and fell pierced with a dozen bullets.

"These and many other spots in the neighborhood, on which the hero had yielded up his life so frequently, I recognized; and I was so affected by the sacredness of the place that

I accompanied the old gentleman to the Alamo Saloon—to conceal my emotions.

"When we returned, I said, 'Colonel, where is the sacred spot where Crockett stood in the doorway, and choked the passage with the remains of the Mexicans that he brained with the butt of his gun?'

" 'Here!' said the aged gentleman, leading me into a small room with massive walls, 'he took his position close to the door and piled dead Mexicans on top of each other, until the doorway was full, and he was killed by a bullet that entered that little window up there.'

"After I had gazed with indescribable feelings of reverential awe at the grim, silent walls that must have lent their ears to the din of battle, the death-yell of the Texans, and the shouts of the victorious Mexicans, I asked the aged gentleman if he was positive that this was the identical spot where David Crockett died like a tiger at bay; and he said there was no doubt about it. After being convinced of the correctness of the old gentleman's historical knowledge, it was with feelings too emotional to describe that I begged him to show me the other room, where Crockett, emaciated to a skeleton by fever, had his arms brought to his bedside, and there perished in his bed, after filling the room with deceased Mexican soldiers. . . .

". . . There are a great many different and conflicting accounts of the battle; so many, in fact, that I, who have heard all of them, or nearly all, am harassed with doubts about any battle ever having been fought there at all. If what the old residents and historians say be true, there is not a spot within a quarter of a mile of the Alamo where Travis did not yield up his life rather than submit to the hireling foe, who would have shot him anyhow. There is not a hole or corner in the whole building where Crockett, while he was sick in bed, did not offer up, with the butt of his rifle, from eleven to seventy-five Mexicans, most of them of high rank. Adding up all the

Mexicans the historians have killed, it aggregates a number that is fearful to even think of. I have read everything that has been invented on the subject, including some very poor poetry I made myself; I have had strangers from the North tell me about it; and I have come to the conclusion that, after all, I know very little about the Battle of the Alamo."

Today in San Antonio, and in most Texas towns where residents of Mexican origin make up a considerable part of the population, another battle is being fought. Considering the elements involved, and without stretching the point too far, it can be called the Third Battle of the Alamo.

A fairly important skirmish in the Third Battle of the Alamo took place, fittingly enough, on the eve of San Jacinto Day, 1939, in Military Plaza. There, and in the adjoining square, Main Plaza, the tents of the midway shows, part of the Fiesta de San Jacinto, had been pitched.

Crowds milled along the lanes lined by sideshows, dime museums, girlie-girlie performances, games of chance and skill, age-guessers, weight-guessers, ferris wheels, zoomaplanes. There, amid the gaiety and revelry, the dishing out of joy at a dime-a-chance, a rather serious clash occurred, serving to bring public attention to the third battle.

The fight involved two groups of high-school boys, one of Mexican origin, and the other of various origins not Mexican. An assortment of weapons was brought into play, including the ingenious one consisting of a razor blade stuck in the toe of the shoe, with cutting edge facing the foe. These added an exotic touch to what might have been just an ordinary exchange of fist-smacks or knife-thrusts. After the skirmish, all men and boys entering Military and Main plazas were frisked for weapons by the cops. The Fiesta fight recalled the bitter feud that exists between a high school where most of the pupils are of Mexican origin, and schools where most of them are not. It far transcends the ordinary rivalry between schools,

so that football games and other athletic encounters become real battles, dangerously close to race war.

Politically, socially, economically, the priority rights of the Whites over the Black and over the Tan have become pretty well incrustated. They have all been "put in their place." But the Mexican, a man who has been taught to believe, a man of great faith, somehow keeps holding to the quaint notions enunciated by our fundamental charter and institutions. He believes, for instance, that *all* men are entitled to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, and that there should be no discrimination because of race, creed, or previous condition of servitude.

He happens to be, say, a resident of the fourth or fifth or sixth generation in this country, brought up in American schools, paying American taxes, fighting American wars, working for American employers. He cannot understand why he should be segregated as something different, as something un-American.

A trip to San Antonio's West Side—known romantically as Little Mexico—will convince anyone of the two separate worlds that live side by side in the same city and pay taxes into the same treasury. But what the two armies in the Third Battle of the Alamo get for their tax money is something else again. The story of San Antonio's slums—biggest in America—has been told and re-told. So has the story of the intensive exploitation of labor, such as the pecan shellers, for instance.

But there is so much beauty, too, in San Antonio and around it, that must not be overlooked. Let us hop into a car and take a drive. We can ride around the South Loop and see the old missions and some of the flying fields. Or we can take a drive out toward Fort Sam Houston, and become aware again of the tremendous influence of the army on the life of San Antonio.

Headquarters for the Eighth Corps Area, San Antonio

would be much less the city it is without the army payroll. Its social whirl, among the whirliest in Texas, would be deprived of a great deal of its charm and continental aspect if the cosmopolitan officers and their families were to be suddenly subtracted. Besides Fort Sam Houston, right at San Antonio, the city gets the benefit also of Randolph Field, "West Point of the Air," which is located just a few miles away.

If we have more time, maybe a day or two, we can make a big loop around San Antonio, say within an eighty-mile radius. Within this circle, we find such charming places as New Braunfels, Seguin, San Marcos, Fredericksburg, Boerne, Gonzales, Castroville, Uvalde, Bandera, Kerrville, Floresville.

This circle includes a big part of the Texas population which came directly from different parts of Europe to Texas. They brought cultural and ethnological influences that supplement those from other parts of the United States, and from colonial and modern Mexico.

We find, in what is known as the Hill Country around San Antonio, settlements of Germans, of Czechs, Poles, French and, farther north and east, beyond the circle, even British settlements or the remains of them. In addition to San Antonio, the communities with the largest percentage of residents of German origin are Fredericksburg, Mason, Brenham, and New Braunfels.

German emigrants turned toward Texas even before it had become an independent republic. In 1830, six years before the Texas declaration of independence, the Galveston Bay and Texas Land Company was organized to bring German colonists to this territory. Among the organizers were a German named Vehlen; David G. Burnet, first provisional president of the Texas Republic; Lorenzo de Zavala, first vice president. After Texas had won its independence, Germans swarmed there.

Germans themselves made plans for what was described by the promoters as "New Germany," as part of the American Union. It was to retain German customs, the German language, and, to all intents and purposes, would be German, except for its political affiliation as a state of the United States. Some of the German communities in Texas almost achieved this on a limited scale.

The first settlement of Germans in Texas was in Austin county, and the first community, named Industry, was founded in 1831, by Dr. Friedrich Ernst. But the first important settlement was established on the Comal River, and named New Braunfels, after Prince Solms-Braunfel who was financially interested in the colonization project.

Another interesting early German colonization project was the community of Bettina, a communistic settlement, headed by a group of young radicals. One of the colonists was Dr. Ferdinand von Herff, who later moved to San Antonio, and became an outstanding citizen.

Dr. Carl Adolf Douai was one of the advanced thinkers among the early Texas Germans. He had aroused the ire of German government officials because of his modern ideas of education. Dr. Douai lived in New Braunfels for a while and later edited a newspaper in San Antonio. He was a strong anti-slavery exponent, as were many Germans, but he was too outspoken for the majority of them. They were relieved when things got so hot for him, as the Civil War approached, that he was forced to move to the North. In Boston, he opened the first kindergarten in the United States, and won a place as a pioneer among educators in this country.

Like some of the Mexican-populated counties in South Texas, the regions where the Germans settled stuck pretty close to their native tongue. It came to be said that you had to have an interpreter to transact business in towns like New Braunfels and Fredericksburg. German customs continue to

this day in many places, and of course there are German-language publications. A great deal of de-Germanizing took place on the surface during the World War of 1914-1918. The younger generation—with the exception of a minority of families sympathetic to Nazism—is fully as American as the next Texan who may be of non-German origin.

Texans classed as "foreign white stock" include nearly 200,000 whose country of origin is Germany; 50,000 from Czechoslovakia; 30,000 from England; 25,000 from Italy; 20,000 from Irish Free State; 15,000 from Poland; 15,000 from Sweden; 11,000 from France; 13,000 from Canada; 9,000 from Scotland; 6,000 from Switzerland; 5,000 from Norway; 5,000 from Denmark; 4,000 from Northern Ireland; and smaller numbers from other countries.

In a number of thriving Polish and Czechoslovakian communities in the state, the customs of the old country continue to prevail.

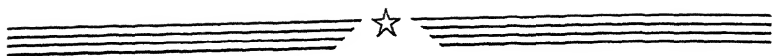
Not far from San Antonio is the little town of Castroville, which looks for all the world like a community in Alsace. It was founded by Henri Castro, a French Alsatian.

Native-born Americans far outweigh the foreign born. Three-fourths of the total Texas population, approximately, is listed as born in Texas.

Back in San Antonio again, you may try to rediscover some of its beauty, some of the special charm it holds for people tired of carefully planned crisscross cities and the crisscross people in them. You stroll along the streets, the crooked streets, and you are thankful that they wind and twist and have surprising curves. You walk along the banks of the turning, snaking San Antonio River that coils itself around the streets, and is just as crooked, and as enchanting. The river has been landscaped by WPA. Little foot bridges were erected, benches and tables placed in cool spots along its edges. Instead of merely looking at it from the street above,

you can now go down to the river, get close to it, live with it for an hour or two if you are so inclined.

From the top of a skyscraper you may look out upon San Antonio and see a panorama that tells a story very quickly. What you see is not an imposing array of tall office buildings, a stone and mortar skyline. No. You look out upon a vast expanse of green. There are a few tall buildings, but they look like accidents, like strange vertical swellings on an otherwise restful, reclining horizontal landscape. You see trees everywhere. Trees down every street, on both sides. Trees along the diagonals, trees on the crosstown streets, trees on the winding lanes of streets, trees along the river, between the houses, trees, trees, trees, pecan, hackberry, cypress, willow, and a host of others. You feel sure that where there is so much natural beauty the ugly things will have to give way eventually.



# III

## SWING YOUR PARTNER

THE annual Old Fiddlers' Reunion and Contest gives you a good sampling of people from East Texas and parts of Central Texas. The gathering has become a music and dance festival, and folks converge from all over everywhere by the thousands. They come from the towns, and out of the hills with their bands of home-made instruments for the big contest, the only time during the year that some of them emerge from their isolation. There are fiddlers, of course, plenty of them, but also sacred harp singers, and mandolin and guitar twangers, and accordion players, and washboard scrapers, and saw-hummers, and horn-tootlers of all kinds.

At the last reunion they even had a blues singer, a prisoner from the Goree Woman's Prison Farm, who also broadcasts over the prison radio, and gets a great deal of fan mail. They brought the band from the Huntsville penitentiary, too. The boys drove up loaded in big Black Marias with armed guards all around, got up and played like they really meant it, and then were locked up again and whisked back to prison.

There were also bands from various shops and mills. Oil workers had an orchestra. One band was from down in the sulphur country. Another, called the Lumber Loggers, was from the mills in the Piney Woods. And even a couple of Cowboy Bands were on hand, from way out in West Texas.

Thousands and thousands of people, here to see and listen,

and to visit with neighbors they had not seen since last year.

They came from Tyler and Marshall and Gladewater and Corsicana and Mexia (that was one tough town during the boom!) and Lufkin and Bryan and Orange and Freeport and Brenham and Nacogdoches and other places.

Folks from Lufkin were talking about their new paper mill that will use native slash pine pulp for the first time. It is a kind of weathervane of the industrialization of Texas.

Folks from Bryan talked about the State Agricultural and Mechanical College there, and the boys, and their football team, the Texas Aggies.

Tyler talked roses, for that is where most of the Texas roses are grown, acres and acres of them.

Freeport and Wharton talked sulphur. Texas is the world's greatest sulphur producer.

But the talkingest folks of all are those from Nacogdoches. They talk history. They can out-talk the San Antonians and the Gonzales folk and those in Houston on this subject. Most of Texas likes to recall that it has "lived under six flags." But up comes Nacogdoches with the boast of "under eight flags." That's Texas for you. Always more or bigger.

One of the streets that cuts through the plaza in Nacogdoches is called Fredonia. It is named after the short-lived "republic" that some impatient Texans proclaimed in 1826, ten years before Texas finally won her independence from Mexico. Stephen F. Austin, "Father of Texas," opposed the Fredonian rebellion. He offered his services to the Mexican government to help crush the Fredonians. Anglo-Saxons were sent against Anglo-Saxons. The Fredonians were quelled. But they warned Austin that he was wrong, that it was just a matter of time before he would be following their lead.

For the Fiddlers' Reunion, six blocks of the main street in town had been cleared. People crowded the sidewalks, listen-

ing to announcements from the loudspeaker. The voice boomed out details of the day's program. Then it stopped and a blast of music roared out, the signal for beginning the square dance. Numerous groups of dancers lined up to await instructions. The music continued, not quite so loud, the words of the dance-master flowing from the loudspeaker, calling the steps:

*Get your partners!  
Balance all!  
Everybody dance!  
Swing the corners,  
Now swing your partners.  
Head couples, forward and back.  
Half right, and left through.  
Back again, and swing your partners,  
and Grand Promenade.  
Side couples, forward and back,  
Half right and left through,  
Back again and swing the corners,  
Lady in the center.  
Now swing all around,  
and swing again,  
And back to your corners,  
And do-se-do.*

While the dance was in progress, I strolled along the sidewalk, through the crowd, listening to bits of conversation here and there, stopping now and then to talk to someone I knew, or somebody I thought I might like to know.

One old lady said to another old lady:

"Well, you know, when it comes to planting beans, it sure is a whole lot like praying. You plant them because you've got faith that they're gonna grow, and you pray they'll come up, but you gotta do everything you can to help. You gotta hoe and weed, and it's the same about anything else you pray for."

The loudspeaker roared out another dance tune:

*Take her by the lily white hand,  
And lead her like a pigeon,  
Make her dance the weevily wheat,  
Till she loses her religion.  
A little more of the weevily wheat,  
A little more of your barley,  
A little more of your weevily wheat,  
To bake a cake for Charley.*

The fellow I least expected to run across here was Andy, the leader of the cowboy orchestra from near Lubbock, a friendly jaunt of about five hundred miles. He told me about Mel, a young man who had quite a run on doodlebugging in the Red River sandhills:

"He was doing pretty good with his job in the railroad yards, but you know how it is with the treasure-hunting bug once it bites you. Lots of folks out there got it, maybe because the diggin's easy. Couple a years ago Mel hunted him a little Messkin kid whose folks said he had X-ray eyes, that he could see right into the ground. The kid showed him the spot but he didn't find a thing. Later on he got to reading and studying and the first thing you know he had himself fixed up with a home-made doodlebug. It took him to the same place in the sandhills. He and a friend went diggin' there. When they had about a fifteen-foot hole dug, his pardner stopped to rest on the bank. Mel stayed in the hole, diggin', and before he knew it the bank caved in on top of him. He left a widow and two young kids."

The loudspeaker:~

*The fiddler is drunk and he can't play,  
The fiddler is drunk and he can't play,  
The fiddler is drunk and he can't play,  
So early in the morning.*

Andy tugged at my arm.

"Well, I'll be dadgummed," he said, "lookit over there. Did you ever see anything like that in your whole life? I've never seen such traveling in all my born days."

We walked toward a young man and a young woman. Both set down wheelbarrows they had been pushing. One barrow was full of bundles. A baby lay asleep in the other.

"Where you-all from?" Andy asked.

"We been down around the Corpus Christi country."

"You mean you walked up all the way, pushing those wheelbarrows?"

"Yeah, we're on our way to Wichita. There'll be some work there soon, and we can stay with some of our folks."

"You're walking all the way?"

"Uh, huh, that's right, one wheelbarrow is like the freight car; we carry all our belongings in it. The baby rides in the other one. We stop in towns where I can tear off a breakdown on the fiddle, and Odie, that's my wife, can sing."

"Howdy, Miz. Spiggins," Andy said to an old-maidish woman, who stopped to talk a while. She was Ella Spiggins, who's been teaching school nigh onto thirty year.

"Oh, and I almost forgot to tell you," she said just before she moved on. "We had the loveliest supper at our school-house last Wednesday night. We all had lots to eat, and oodles of fun. And say, the awfulest thing, the other day some of the boys in Mr. Smith's room caught a snake and brought it in, and they kept it in a box. Yesterday they looked for it and the snake was gone. Everybody's scared to death it might be curled up in a desk somewhere. Wasn't that awful?"

The loudspeaker:

*Wheel come off the old bean wagon,  
Wheel come off the old bean wagon,  
Wheel come off the old bean wagon,  
Won't you be my darling?*

I chatted with Ma Gillis from Grimes county. She's won the home demonstration contest for three years in a row. I learned some valuable secrets:

"No, no, I don't mean just canning the pork bones. I mean canning the whole hog, and it seems to me that it comes out cheaper to can than to dry. Well, I'll tell you how we came out with the pig I bought. It cost nine cents a pound, dressed, and it weighed seventy-five pounds. I canned every bit of it, except the little that we ate. That was about four months ago, and we still have a little of that left. And not one jar was spoiled. Just the other day I had a nice dish of backbone and ribs.

"Was it good, did you ask? It was just simply grand. But if you're going to do any canning now, I believe I'd advise one thing, and that is to sort out the different kinds of bones and cuts in separate jars. Put the marrow bones in one jar, and the other bones in another. I don't do any cooking before packing any more. I pack the meat raw, salt it, just a little, and seal it and then put the jars in a big wash pot.

"First put a cloth in the bottom of the pot, and the jars on the cloth, so the jars don't touch the metal. Cover the jars with another cloth, and then fill the pot with cold water and build a fire to the pot. Don't put any water in the jars. There will be plenty of gravy when the meat is cooked. I think this method gives the best flavor.

"You have to be careful not to overcook, which is easy to do. I always turn a big washtub over the wash pot while the meat is cooking, and I always make sure the jars are well covered with water and wrapped up real good. I do all my canning cold and boil until the meat is done. It's so much easier and better than the other ways. I do the same with fruits and vegetables, and they all have a better flavor."

All through East Texas, housewives are old hands at home-canning. Pantries are full of fruits, vegetables, meats, pre-

served during the seasons when they're cheap. No matter how tough times are, there is always another jar of something that can be eaten.

The loudspeaker:

*Flies in the buttermilk, skip to my Lou,  
Flies in the buttermilk, skip to my Lou,  
Flies in the buttermilk, skip to my Lou,  
Skip to my Lou, my darling.*

Mr. Elder is talking to his little girl. He takes a pinch of snuff. I stopped and heard:

"This time of year the sparrows are so tame, or so hungry, they'll come right up to you to feed. The robins are gone, but there is a woodpecker, and alongside of it a cowbird. On the ground, those are doves picking up the seed, and those two flying out of the pine tree are redbirds. And that's a cowbird. Do you know what kind of a bird a cowbird is? It lays its eggs in other birds' nests so it won't have to be bothered hatching them."

The loudspeaker:

*Grab your partner, stand up straight,  
Lift your feet, and all hands out,  
Cut the corners, and shuffle around,  
Everybody bow and do-see-doe.*

The Professor from Stephen F. Austin State Teachers' College was at the reunion, too. He was preparing a thesis on the people of the Piney Woods, and some of the villages of the Big Thicket, for his Ph.D. He has been traveling around, writing down songs and sayings of the people.

He recognizes someone.

"Well, there's Aunt Betty. I'll bet she's never been out of Lernmen Hills all her life, and she's way past eighty. She must be having one big time of her life."

In a few moments we were talking with Aunt Betty. She told us of her visit to Beaumont, where she used a telephone for the first time. She took an elevator ride, and then rode up and down for fifteen minutes.

"I seen 'em selling liquor right out in the open and none of the revenooers was a-bothering," she said. "But it's the movie pitchers I liked best of all. I'd like to tote my rocking-chair to the city, just to sit and watch the pitchers till I'm ready to die."

Aunt Betty leaves us and joins a group of dancers.

The Professor continues:

"It is amazing to think about some of the primitive folk of our state, the people who still live in what we call ethnological pockets. You'll find hundreds of men and women who have never been out of their communities, nor have their fathers and mothers before them. They stick to themselves and their ways and their customs, and even their language, which is quaint to our ears, but it must have been the ordinary thing, and musical enough it is, to the neighbors of long ago in Stratford-on-Avon.

"Yes, the people in the pockets in some of the East Texas places are Anglo-Saxon, descendants of English immigrants who came to this country back in 1835. Most of their villages have been deserted, but a handful here and another handful there stuck it out, making the useful things they need from the raw materials at hand, and living a life as simple as that of a medieval village.

"They are still using the same hickory chairs with raw-hide seats that their grandfathers made. And there have been no blends with other people, no strangers. They have stayed pure, and it is only now, during the last few years, that they are beginning to change. It is not because they have been wanting to come out, but because the government people have been making the rounds of the farm communities to

see what could be done to help. You know, the farm program, and resettlement.

"It's a funny thing, but these people have been living in their own way, many of them in the worst kind of poverty according to our middle-class standards, for a couple of generations or more. It is only now that the government has begun to get interested in them, since the depression. So for them, at any rate, the depression has been quite a good thing."

*The loudspeaker:*

"Here is the prize winning recipe of the Reunion. Lemon cake: Two cups of sugar, three-fourths of a cup of butter, three eggs, three cups of flour, one cup of milk, and three spoons of baking powder. Cream the butter and sugar, add the milk, sift the flour and baking powder three times, add vanilla and beaten egg whites. . . ."

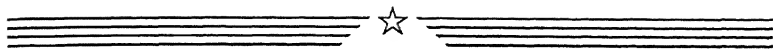
*Sent my brown jug down to town,  
Sent my brown jug down to town,  
Sent my brown jug down to town,  
Early in the mornin'.*

The reunion went on for two days and two nights. Everybody seemed to have soaked up enough gossip, new recipes, songs and sundry information to last until next year, I thought, as I left for Houston and the Oil World Exposition.

“PAUL BUNYAN WENT TO TEXAS . . .”







# IV

## CLOSE-UP TWO

DID you ever hear the one, the oil man asked, about the rich seventy-year-old retired driller who decided to marry an eighteen-year-old girl? His friends were a bit surprised, and one of them tried to argue him out of going through with it.

"Look, John," his friend said, "it's really not a lot of my business, you know, but we always talked frank. That's why I want to say you shouldn't be doing this. You know what usually happens in marriages like that. You two are far apart in age and in temperament and in everything else, and you certainly are no physical match for the girl. In self-defense, if for no other reason, she'll have to be chasing around with younger people, and you know what that will lead to. Why don't you do the decorous thing, if you must get married? Pick out a woman somewhat nearer your age, one who can be a constant companion to you."

"I'll tell you, Frank," the old man answered. "I agree with everything you said. But you know I've had a lot of experience. We have been over a lot of oil bumps together. We've brought in gushers and we've worked our heads off on dry holes and lost a lot of money on them. Now you be honest and tell me, which did we always get more excited about—a new well we hoped would ring the bell, or an old one that had nearly quit producing? Just as a gambler, now,

wouldn't you rather be part owner of the first in a proven field than to be full owner of the one that had seen its best days?"

Stories along this line, but most of them told in much more naked language, dripping with oil-field figures of speech, amid lusty handshakes, backslaps and rich repartee, filled the lobbies of Houston's hotels. The talk rumbled toward the ceiling in a confused murmur, borne aloft by swirls of smoke from cigars and cigarettes and pipes, and just a thin acid-scented mist of evaporating sweat. In the hotel rooms, over bottles of rye and scotch and bourbon, more oil men, their shirts peeled off, were throwing the bull in heavy lunges; shooting craps, playing poker. Women—clad in what one of the boys called appeasement robes—roamed in and out of the rooms.

Over at the Sam Houston Coliseum, another kind of show was going on, hailed as the "greatest oil show on earth," and known as the Oil World Exposition. It was mammoth, it was colossal, it was superb. It was the giant oil industry on display. There at the Coliseum was the official program. In the hotels, at private residences, at bars, and at spots of more intimate entertainment—the unofficial program.

Neither, by itself, was the Petroleum Exposition. But together they represented petroleum on parade. Here was the Oil Show, here the Oil Capital of the world, here Houston with what it proclaimed proudly as the city's greatest asset. Houston was melting in the arms of its sweetest sugardaddy. Oh, Cotton and Lumber and Rice and Sulphur are all right, but my heart belongs to Pete the great Provider, Pete the Powerful, Pete the Great, Pete the Petroleum Plutocrat. The date was April 24, just a few days after San Jacinto Day, which is also a great Houston day, now fittingly marked with the *tallest* monument in the country, on the San Jacinto battlefield near by. April 21 belonged to Sam Houston, the po-

litical liberator. But April 24 belonged to the economic liberator, Pete. Nothing else mattered. This was Pete's day.

And why shouldn't it be? Listen to the Chamber of Commerce:

"Houston is the hub of an area of one hundred and fifty miles in radius that contains more than seventy-five producing fields and yields approximately one hundred million dollars' worth of oil annually. More than one-half of the entire world's oil production comes from within a radius of six hundred miles from Houston.

"Houston is the location of approximately one thousand oil companies and affiliated industries, including the major oil corporations.

"Houston is the world's largest oil refining center and the world's leading manufacturer of oil-field equipment.

"The oil industry employs fifty-five thousand Houston citizens. More than two hundred and fifty thousand persons in the city are dependent upon oil for a livelihood.

"Through Houston terminals and refineries flows sixty-one per cent of all the petroleum produced in the United States. Pipelines and tank cars from five neighboring states converge on Houston.

"Of the two hundred and fifty-four counties in Texas, only fourteen have not been either explored or developed by the oil industry, headquarters for which is Houston."

The real celebration, everybody agreed, should commemorate the Lucas gusher in the Spindletop field near Beaumont, January 10, 1901. That was the gusher that really set off Texas oil production.

A few insist that the Corsicana well of 1895 was the beginning, but its measly two-and-a-half barrels a day, and even its sixty-six thousand barrels in 1897, were relatively a few squirts. In 1900, the total Texas production was around eight hundred thousand barrels. In 1901, after Spindletop blew in, production passed the four-million-barrel mark, and the following year Spindletop all by itself made seventeen million barrels of Texas crude.

You can take your pick of celebrations, however. There are all kinds of dates, all kinds of gushers, all kinds of booms, in North, in West, in South, in East Texas. In 1937, Texas produced five hundred million barrels of oil.

They can have their statistics and Exposition, and the superb and highly educational display at the Coliseum. I'm going over to the hotel and soak up a little scotch and with it some of the durndest yarns—about fish-tail bits and crown-blocks and gate valves and sucker-rod hangers and catheads and tool dressers and Christmas trees. Also about lucky stiffes who peddled neckties and slept in the gutter; then something came in on a hunk of lease and put them on their feet, even made millionaires out of shoestring leasehounds.

Back in the hotel, sure enough, the first thing I ran into was one of the boys giving all the lowdown on the Spindletop. It might seem that people should have got rich off a gusher that spouted in eighty thousand barrels of oil a day, but this man says no. He says he got it straight from Curt Hamill, who helped drill the Spindle-goddam-top. He tells us that more than a million barrels flowed out onto the ground when the well was running wild. The oil that was saved later sold at mighty low prices. During the Spindletop boom, it dropped to three cents a barrel because the demand was nowhere near the supply. The real cry for oil came during the World War and after.

That old Lucas well was an education in itself for a lot of

the boys. In 1901, folks were still pretty green about how to go after oil, and what to do with it so it wouldn't all go to waste. On the spur of the moment, because they had to have it, it seems, the Lucas gusher drillers invented the back-pressure valve. Everybody in the business has been using that handy little gadget since then. Now it comes machine-made, but the Lucas boys fashioned a very crude one, being the first, out of a hunk of pinewood that somebody whittled into shape, and then they tacked a strip of leather on. Also they learned how to use mud for controlling a well. None of the Old-Timers will ever forget the boom that followed the Spindletop gusher. It is still something to remember how Beaumont got to be a city overnight. No boom since then, Ranger or Burkburnett or any of them, was more exciting than Spindletop.

Maybe the Lucas didn't make any money, as the old boy claimed. But I got into another session a little while later where each man was trying to outdo the other in telling about the lucky guys who struck it rich. You listen to them for a while and nobody afterward will ever sell you on the idea that more money has been put into the ground looking for oil than has come out of it. There's old Hank from Kilgore, now. He made a little stake himself out of that boom, but nothing like what some of them did.

Listen to what Hank says:

"You know it turned out in Kilgore that there was oil not only out in the field a little ways from where the town grew up. I'll be doggoned if it wasn't right there under the streets and the houses and the store buildings. Pretty soon everybody who had bought himself a little piece of land had an oil well going on it, or had it leased to somebody else for drilling. It got to be a kind of free-for-all. They all figgered like they was pulling from the same hole, so it was first come first served, as a feller says.

"And some of those wells, everywhere, anywhere, were

drilled on a shoestring and a junkpile rig, with a big load of nerve and plenty of elbow grease. Old Dummy over there, who's selling oil-well supplies now, will never get tired of telling about the chance he missed. It was just plain hard luck, because Lord knows he was willing enough. Dummy was dressing tools then, and it was on a wildcat, but near enough a steady producer so's a feller could feel like he had a long shot at something good.

"Everything was done on the cuff on some of the wells. Here was a driller, a kind of manager of the outfit, who knew the ropes but didn't have a rag to blow his nose in. This boss driller would spot himself a likely looking piece of land. Then he'd nearly talk his arm off trying to get the farmer to agree to give him a lease without any rent except what would come out of the oil, if there was oil. After that was fixed, he'd have to hunt himself a lawyer who would draw up all the papers and check the deeds and all the red tape, and do it without a fee except a part interest in the well. That wasn't so hard, but he had to watch the lawyer like a hawk to see that nothing was being pulled on him. Now, maybe you think he was all set.

"But what about equipment? You can't go down there and dig a well with your fingernails, can you? So he goes to one place where they know him and are making enough money so they'll take a chance and he gets himself some drills and pumps. Then he calls on the junkman who sold used equipment and promotes himself some secondhand pipe and maybe enough stuff to set up a junkpile rig. All on jawbone. Those Jewboys in the oil fields were pretty good guys, most of them, and they took a lot of chances. Not many of them ever got into the real big money, though. They played the sideshows instead of the big top. Then there were the blocks to get. Then he'd have to find himself some monkeys who were willing to work on spec—if they hit oil, okay, they'd get

their pay and a bonus, and if they didn't, it was just too bad.

"Well, Dummy tied up with one of these outfits, and they went to drilling. They got down I forget just how many hundred feet it was and they can't go any farther. Some of their tools and equipment broke and got used up. They can't get any more unless they raise some cash. The boss driller says he'll make them a proposition. If each one can raise a hundred bucks he'll let 'em have so much interest in the well, and it begins to look, from the first showings, that there might be something doing in that hole.

"Dummy had himself a little saved up in the bank from other jobs, but had to go clear into town to get it. The bank was closed when he got there, and most places were leery about cashing checks because there had been a lot of the bouncing kind around. So by the time he finally finds one place where they'll cash it for him, it's too late to get back to the fields. He goes out next morning and he finds that in the meantime the boss driller had gone and sold his interest in the well because he'd run into a proposition that looked better. The fellow who bought him out says he has enough money to finish the job. So they do, and damme if they don't hit a producer. Dummy gets his pay all right, and his bonus, but boy, he'd a been sitting pretty now if he'd got to the boss driller in time."

"Too bad," one of the men says, "that old Ira Yates couldn't be around now, but he kicked the bucket just a couple of weeks ago."

Yates got to be a multi-millionaire, from oil he found on his land, which was one hundred per cent wildcat. In a way, Yates's story is typical of many men who had been working at a lot of other things before the oil bug bit them.

Yates's life might also provide another symbol for the state. He lived a pretty long time before he got rich off oil. He was sixty-seven when the wildcat came in, and he was

seventy-nine when he died. Up to the oil discovery, he had done farm work, had been a cowboy, a horse dealer, storekeeper, livestock trader, and rancher. When he was twelve years old he had worked digging peanuts in Wilson county for fifty cents a day pay. When he died he had more wells on his land than there were on any other piece of land in the state.

Before oil happened along, he went broke twice, the second time in the 1907 panic. He was forty-eight years old then, and he started all over again. By 1916 he had a store at Rankin, but he preferred the fields. When he got a chance to trade his store for a ranch across the Pecos River, he took it. Folks in town told him he was foolish, that it was wild, worthless land, and dry. But he went anyhow, fenced the land, dug his water wells, installed tanks, fought the land as best he could through ten dry years. It was on his sixty-seventh birthday that the first oil well came in, and now the Yates field has nearly six hundred wells on it. Opened up, it could produce something like eight million barrels a day. It already has run more than two hundred and fifty million barrels out of that dry old Pecos county ranch country.

Many cattle kings, ranchmen with big tracts of dry, "worthless" land, have jumped overnight into the millionaire class by the discovery of oil on their properties. Not a few now live in Houston. Some of the descendants have an entirely different slant on things from the old rancher ancestors. Making their first big money in oil, many have continued in the game, speculating in various fields when they are not using their money for indulging expensive hobbies.

Some Texas oil millionaires have attained national renown through such little pastimes as play-producing, backing movies, making round-the-world flights, or divorcing chorines attached in gin-marriages. Others have achieved local immortality through art donations and sundry philanthropic

pursuits. Naturally, then, because of the money in the industry, and its great influence on many people, oil is a major interest to Texans generally. News of petroleum is followed with almost the same zest as that directed toward the sports pages. Practically every daily newspaper, even in the smaller cities, has an oil editor, who conducts an oil column. It is hard to say just what our great empire of a state might have been if it had not been blessed with huge deposits of petroleum. Certainly the story of East Texas, of Houston, most favored of East Texas cities, would have been different, in magnitude, if not in kind.

Houston is not, however, what might be called an oil-boom town, in the sense that it sprang from nothingness into its present vigorous state. It had its measure of steady growth from the time of the Texas Revolutionary period—when it was just a landmap gleam in the eye of a gentleman named Allen—on up to the days when unsuspected treasures of black gold were discovered under the Texas soil. With the rise of petroleum, the arrival of Pete the Plutocrat, Houston really began to spread. In two decades it marched on up the statistical tabulations, passing San Antonio—one time metropolis—on the bend, and then Dallas, on the stretch. Now Houston has moved several lengths ahead of the Texas field.

General Santa Anna, sometimes called the "Napoleon of the West," must again be given credit in the case of Houston, as in the case of San Antonio, for really getting things started. By his no-quarter siege of the Alamo, he gave the Texans a battle-cry which they still fight under today. By burning Harrisburg, he became the unwitting midwife that delivered the infant town of Houston, now regarded by many Houstonians as God's gift to Texas. Ironically enough, Harrisburg today is a suburb of Houston. Before it was burned, Harrisburg had been the theater of activity for the two leading land-developing families, the Allens and the Harrises. There was

some disagreement between the two, and the Allens decided to lay out a town up the bayou, about six miles as the crow flies from Harrisburg. It was, however, the destruction of Harrisburg that gave Houston its first boost.

Some years before the building of the first railroad, Houston had already become the common carrier for Texas. At that settlement on the bayou, practically all the ox-wagon traffic of the state was concentrated, and it was big business. Thousands of wagons were engaged in the trade, bringing products from the interior of the southwest territory, to be exchanged for manufactured articles in Houston. Hardly a bale of cotton grown in Texas failed to arrive eventually at Houston. It was sent there usually for transshipment to Galveston, the leading cotton export point until the Civil War blockade moved the trade down the coast to the neutral boom-town of Bagdad. Houston today is still the concentration point—no longer of ox-wagons, but of railroads, busses, airways and steamship lines.

Houston was home-made from its very beginnings. Its story provides a sharp contrast with that of San Antonio in this respect. The Anglo-Saxons, et al, who came to settle in San Antonio and vicinity found a local government already established. The form of administration and the administrators themselves were imported from Spain, indirectly, and more directly from Mexico City, a thousand miles away. They found a pretty rigid set of rules already made. They had to conform to these to be permitted life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, or whatever it was they wanted to pursue. They found, furthermore, an established church, whose doctrine all the settlers were bound to accept, at least formally, because it was the only church permitted by law.

But Houston . . .

Today's Big Town of Texas was laid out on a flat stretch of swamp land. Its Anglo-Saxons did not find established

government and established religion that were in every way foreign to them. As a matter of fact, they had to make their own government pretty much out of their own experience, as they built the first buildings from the same stuff, with the raw materials at hand. There was no church monopoly in young Houston to claim their souls before they had a chance to try them in this new territory. Houston's first settlers gathered for their prayers, at the beginning, under the shade of a big tree. There were no established routes over a special toll-bridge to Heaven. These settlers brought their own religion. They sent for their preachers later, when things had become sufficiently advanced to warrant that much specialization.

Early Houston, in fact, was what you might call a preacher's paradise. It was a rough, tough, goddam-it-all, tussling town, teeming with all kinds of things that make good preaching against. There was a soul to be saved almost anywhere you pointed a Bible. The town folk themselves began to feel the need of preaching so much that practically anyone who arrived in the proper clerical garb was accepted as a man of the Lord.

Some of the people had by this time already sent a call to the regularly organized denominations. They wanted some hard-hitting preacher who was willing to come down and take on the Devil for a fight to the finish—one ready to use whatever weapons the Devil chose, be they words, or fists or knives or pistols. It was during these early days that Houston and much of East and Central Texas saw the beginnings of the Texas tradition of six-gun preachers, Bible in saddlebag, riding herd on Satan and his stampeding sinners. But not only the righteous sought preachers.

The heaping of coals of hellfire on the slipping souls was but one phase of the profession as known then. The gamblers and others whose mode of livelihood did not exactly find ap-

proval among the more puritanical, also wanted preachers. They needed those who would give them consolation, and perhaps a certain amount of justification for their churchless lives. Send us one, they seemed to plead, who can cite Scripture to show that the light of the Lord shines on all, good and evil, alike, and that the lilies of the field they toil not neither do they spin yet they belong to the Creator; in short, that all God's children, even the prostitutes, panders and hypocrites, got wings. They wanted someone who could look at these things somewhat in the manner of that famous funeral oration delivered at Riley Grannan's funeral.

Riley Grannan was a gambler famous throughout the Southwest. He came from Kentucky and he worked at a number of things before he hit the West, from bellhop onward, and wound up as a big-time gambler in Rawhide, Nevada. He was known throughout the Southwest as a plunger, regarded with the same awe by his fellow gamblers as the small speculators might regard a big-shot Wall Street gambler. Any Old-Timer will agree that the oration for Riley Grannan is exactly the kind of thing that might have been spoken over any one of many of Grannan's confrères in Texas. It might easily have been delivered in Houston, during the early days, by the "justification" school of preachers—"justification" as distinguished from the "purification" school that preached to the more upright citizens.

But listen:

". . . it is not irreverently that I proclaim him a dead game sport. . . . There are those who will condemn him. They believe that today he is reaping the reward of a misspent life. They are those who are dominated by medieval creeds. Those I am not addressing. They are ruled by the skeleton hand of the past. They fail to see the moral side of character lived outside their puritanical ideas. Riley Grannan's goodness was not a type that reached its highest manifestations in cere-

monious piety. It found its expression in the handclasp of friendship. It found its voice in the word of cheer to a discouraged brother. His were deeds of quiet charity. His were acts of manhood.

"Riley Grannan lived in the world of sport. My words are not minced, because I am telling what I believe to be true. It was the world of sport, sometimes of hilarity, sometimes worse. He left the impress of his character upon us all, and through the medium of his financial power he was able with his money to brighten the lives of those who knew him. He wasted his money, so the world says. But did it ever occur to you that the men and women of such class upon whom he wasted it are yet men and women? A little happiness brought into their lives means as much to them as happiness carried into the lives of the straight and good. If you can take one ray of sunshine into the night life and thereby create a single hour of happiness, you are a benefactor. Riley Grannan did this.

"God confined His sunbeams not to the nourishing of potatoes and corn. His scattering of sunshine was prodigal. Contemplate. He flings the auroral beauties around the cold shoulders of the north. He hangs the quivering picture of the mirage above the palpitating heart of the desert. He scatters the sunbeams like shattered gold upon the bosom of a myriad of lakes that gem the robe of nature. He spangles the canopy of night with star jewels, and silvers the world with the reflected beams from on high. He hangs the gorgeous crimson curtain of the Occident across the sleeping room of the sun. God wakes the coy maid of the morning to step timidly from her boudoir of darkness, to climb the steep of the Orient, to fling wide the gate of morning, and to trip over the landscape, kissing the flowers in her flight. She arouses the world to herald with effulgent gold. These are wasted sunbeams. Are they?

"I say to you that the man or woman who, by the use of

money, or power, is able to smooth over one wrinkle from the brow of human care, or to change one sob or moan into song, or to wipe away a tear, and to place in its stead a jewel of joy, is a public benefactor. Such was Riley Grannan."

What gambler or other gentleman of the sporting world would not have given a big chunk of his winnings to be washed away to eternity in such a flood of eloquence?

The story of the old-time preacher, the fire-eating, devil-whipping evangelist, however, does not belong strictly in the Houston area. It had its fullest development a little farther north, in East Central and North Central Texas, the Bible Belt of the state. A kind of preachers' feud developed in early Houston between the justificationists and the purificationists. One result was what is supposed to have been the first Vigilance Committee in Texas, formed by preachers of established denominations, to combat the free-lances, described as "fraudulent preachers." This background may also be helpful in understanding why the twentieth-century Ku Klux Klan found one of its strongholds in Houston.

All this talk about churches and preachers and immortality and life and other such serious topics, which seems to develop as the level of the bottle drops, had its turn at the bull session with the oil men. It was set off by a newspaper headline, reporting a speech made by the Governor. In his Sunday morning broadcast, the Governor, who had wooed and won the voters largely with hillbilly music and pension promises, plus an able publicity campaign, could now talk about History with a capital H. It was an historic week, just a couple of days since the anniversary of the Battle of San Jacinto. The need of the people today more than anything else, the Governor said, is religion, an old-time religious revival. Such revivals are going on constantly in Texas, everywhere, but what he meant was that it should be statewide.

"History proves that it takes depressions to bring people

to their knees," the Governor told his radio audience. "Ever since the records have been kept, statistics show that a period of prosperity always follows increased church membership."

The Governor further elaborated his formula for bringing back good times:

"You know folks, I actually believe that what we need in this world today more than anything else is a big revival. We used to have them every once in a while in the little town of Arlington. Not many people would go the first few nights, then everybody would get to talking about it, and more folks would start going.

"After a while the meanest boys and men would sneak in. And a lot of them would get converted, and we could all notice that the town and the country all around for miles had less meanness going on and less trouble after we had one of those old-fashioned revivals. And that proves that they did good, and I would like to see a lot of them going on in Texas.

"When I sit in church and hear the preacher plead and coax folks to become Christians I wonder what is holding them back. Why in the world do folks reject Christ and refuse to become Christians? They have everything to gain and nothing to lose.

"It's the silliest thing on earth to put off becoming a Christian and yet some mighty smart people just keep putting it off.

"You old folks who want pensions, you young folks who want jobs, you farmers who want crops, all of you folks who want things—how do you expect to get them when you are slapping the Savior in the face by ignoring his teachings?

"Let's have a religious revival in Texas immediately. Let's have Texas lead the nation and the world to recovery through the only practical way—the religious revival way."

Each man in the bull session had his own ideas about re-

ligion and churches. Most of them didn't especially like preachers, although they knew some mighty fine men who are preachers. Their relationship with God, those who believed, they felt as something strictly personal and private. Somehow it had nothing to do with churches and doctrine. Their God seemed to be much closer to the oil business than to the church. One of the men admitted, without flinching at the thought that he might get a razzing from some of the roughnecks, that he prayed every night, his own prayer, and it helped him to solve his problems. There was no razzing. Most of the men seemed to recognize it as something they too had experienced at times, maybe not calling it prayer.

But the subject of religion began dragging, getting heavy. When somebody mentioned Kemp Morgan it was like turning on a bright light in a dark room. There was a revival of interest immediately. From then on the session became a round-robin of tall stories, with Kemp Morgan, folk hero of the oil fields, and Paul Bunyan, the lumberjack giant, sharing the honors. Of course, Babe, Paul Bunyan's Big Blue Ox, was also included. Each man added a little, maybe something he had picked up, maybe something he was inventing on the spot. From the various bits, including my own extemporaneous contribution, I pieced together the story of Paul Bunyan and Kemp Morgan digging oil wells in Texas—the story, at least, as it was spun in the hotel-room bull session on Pete's day in Houston.

It seems that it all started when Paul's watch stopped running up in the north-woods lumber camp where Paul made his headquarters. Now Paul, as you may know, had fifty hard-grease and fifty soft-grease men at work all the time keeping the wheels running smoothly. But they had just come through a spell of dry rain and everything was caked up, including the watch-grease, so hard that not even the hundred greasemen working together could pry the wheels

loose. The need was evident—some kind of lubricant that would not cake up. It was then that Kemp Morgan, who was up on a visit from the Lone Star State, told Paul about some stuff known as rock oil that he had found while digging artesian wells for ranchers.

“Let’s go,” Paul said, “and if there’s enough of it, maybe I can get my donkey-engines going, too. I haven’t had any good fuel for them.”

So they went to Texas, and took the Blue Ox along.

They pitched their tent at a likely spot for the night and decided to start digging in the morning. But first they had to drive the pegs for the tent poles. Paul swung his ax around his head seven times, and then drove it into the ground. It went in so far that Paul had to hitch Babe to the handle to try to get it out again. Babe pulled and yanked, and yanked and pulled. The Blue Ox stopped to rest when most of the handle was already out and only the head of the ax was still imbedded in the ground.

While Babe rested, the axhead flew out of the ground as if it had been fired by a big cannon. It carried Babe four miles and a quarter up on top of a stream of black stuff shooting out of the ground. It was Paul’s and Kemp’s first gusher.

Then they began digging what turned out to be the biggest oil field in the world. Some of their wells are still flowing, but the derricks in use today are midgets compared to the ones built by Paul and Kemp. Their derricks went up so high they had to waterproof the crownblocks to keep the clouds from warping them.

When the first gusher started, Paul tried to stop it by putting his hand over it. It stopped for a moment, but the next thing you know Paul was going up and up, spinning around. The gusher carried him about a mile up in the air, and he made such a big cloud up there that the folks in Texas didn’t see the sun for three days.

That just gives you an idea of how big a fellow Paul was, and Kemp was almost as big, so that the working stiffs in the lumber camp used to call Kemp by the nickname of Big Shorty. Paul was so big that a pine tree looked like a stunted bush when he stood alongside of it.

Paul, held in the air by the gusher, threw out his watch chain, the one that had a half-ton anchor on the end of it as a charm. The anchor sank into the ground and steadied him. Then he pulled one of the barrels off his seven-barreled shotgun and rammed it down the gusher hole. He bent the barrel so the oil would flow out level, horizontal, instead of upward, vertical.

Kemp finished off the job, and set the style for the way oil workers have been completing wells ever since. The walking-beam was made from one of the logs that Paul used as a toothpick, and a bullwheel was shaped out of a button off his mackinaw. Then he clamped his elkskin cap over the end of the pipe till he could figure out how to make the stuff flow steadily. That is how capping a well came to be known as capping a well.

Since Paul had to work with both hands, he had to invent the left-handed monkey wrench. Because the ordinary pipes were too short for the Bunyan-Morgan wells, they invented the pipe-stretcher. Now all beginners in the oil fields, known as "boll weevils," have to learn to use the left-handed monkey wrench and the pipe-stretcher before they can become full-fledged oil workers.

The deepest well they dug was Old Fifty-Seven. It went right on down to China. It was a gusher, too, but no oil came out of it. After the tools had blown up, a lot of white stuff started coming out. It was rice. Then there was a rush of wind and the rice stopped flowing. Soon there came a stream of hard, crisp fried noodles, and these were followed by a long gurggle, an escape of steam, and then a steady, pulsing flow of

chow mein and chop suey. This came out over the noodles and stacked up into big mountains.

For months, all the oil-field workers ate Chinese food. Five hundred of Paul's Chinese assistants were ordered to carry away all they wanted, after the men had begun squawking for a change of diet. Each Chinese went to a different part of the country and opened a restaurant. Some of them are still serving the original chop suey and chow mein that came from the Morgan-Bunyan well.

A lot of other things came out, too, like lichee nuts and candied ginger. Finally, a Chinese river started running out of the well, and on it was a whole fleet of Japanese gunboats. They floated over into a pool of oil and got stuck in it and their armor plate was all covered with crude. These were the granddaddies of Japanese beetles.

Before going any farther, Paul and Kemp decided to sample the field. This is done by bringing up a core to show the different layers through which the drill-bit is passing.

First they brought up a cylinder of corn pone.

"Now that's a peculiar stratum," Kemp said. "Very rare."

Then up came a slab of sow belly.

Then some stuff that was green in the first section, white in the middle, and red and pulpy at the bottom.

"Watermelon!" they both exclaimed at once.

And they knew the drill had slipped sideways and hit Georgia. They kept on drilling, pushing the drill southward, until it went down into the Gulf of Mexico, and that was the first salt-water well in history.

They moved the casing on across the Gulf till they hit dry land again. On the next sampling they got a lot of colored blankets and a stack of clay dishes, an Aztec calendar stone, a bottle of *tequila* and three tourists. They were sure it was Mexico.

"Aim to the left," Paul said.

Their first Mexican gusher came in at Tampico.

Out of it jumped the Contrary Englishman. He was one of a crew of British oil men who had been scouting down there. The Contrary Englishman had a good head on him, but he had to be watched very carefully. When he was left alone, he always did things just the opposite of what folks expected. That's how he happened to be sucked up into the Kemp-Paul casing. He had been told to sink a pipe and instead he let the pipe sink him.

The last well they drilled in the Mexican field brought in the Great Rubber Flood. The flood started because the drill-bit bored into a forest of big rubber trees down in Tabasco. The rubber spread all over the field in a solid sheet, and for weeks everybody and everything was bouncing. Paul called for Sourdough Slim, the cook, to bring his big doughnut cutter, and Slim punched out a lot of tires. With what was left, Paul made some rubber boilers. These would stretch and stretch, no matter how high the temperature got, so there was never any danger of a boiler exploding. One of the men got the idea that he'd like to make some rubber dollars that would stretch enough to pay a fellow's expenses and leave a bit for smokes. But Paul told him no, because the government had a patent on dollar-making.

From the scraps, Paul manufactured some rubber type, about which any printer can tell you plenty. The rubber type solved a serious problem for make-up men, too, namely, what to do with the stuff left over for column nine of the front page. The Bunyan rubber type stretches or shrinks to fit the space where it is needed. It has proved to be a wonderful thing for headline-writers.

Houston is not, of course, all oil and business and rush. With its great number of millionaires, and its endowed school of higher learning, Rice Institute, Houston has become an

important patron of the arts and sciences. At its Museum of Fine Arts, you are made aware of the cultural strides taken by Texas just emerging from its frontier past. You are reminded again of the beautiful story of Elisabet Ney and what she contributed to her adopted state.

Born in Westphalia, of a Polish mother and a father who was a nephew of the famous Marshal Ney, Elisabet was off to Munich at the age of eighteen. Before long she had become a successful sculptress. She developed a close friendship with Schopenhauer, did his portrait, as well as that of other famous men, such as Richard Wagner, Jacob Grimm, Alexander von Humboldt, Bismarck, Garibaldi. In Munich she met the young English medical student, Edmund Montgomery, who was to become her grand passion. She and this man, soon to gain fame as a biologist, migrated to Georgia, where they sought to establish a colony in which the *mores* might honor human values other than those of money-grubbing. That's the kind of idealists and wild dreamers this man and woman were. The colony was a kind of offshoot of Brook Farm and Reunion and Walden, and like those, failed.

The two lovers, now man and wife, moved to Texas, to a plantation near Hempstead. It wasn't long before Elisabet was frowned upon by the staid neighbors. She was pointed at as one who believed in "free love" and equal rights for women; as an "atheist" and a strange person who insisted on wearing different-looking but comfortable dresses because she hated the way women dressed in those days. She believed in democracy. That's why she had come to the New World. Her democracy was so thorough that few who professed something by the same name could even conceive of what she meant. She kept bumping her head into all kinds of silly conventions and taboos. Trifles to her, they became magnified into major offenses by her puritanical and evil-minded neighbors.

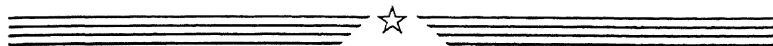
Her life was tragic, bitter, and it could not be otherwise. Even her own son turned against her. But it grew to be more than just a personal struggle. It came to be a fight by this sensitive being for recognition. She loved her adopted state of Texas, the Liendo plantation where she lived, and she wanted to see its fullest possible growth. She developed her art, and her sculpture received recognition everywhere except in Texas. The state where she lived realized her worth much later, mostly after her death. Her exhibit at the Chicago Columbian Exposition was a sensation. It was the work of a woman, but what was even more unheard of, a Texan. Culture and Texas went about as much together at that time as pickles dunked in milk.



“THE SWING BAND WAS OFF...”







# V

## NIGGERTOWN

JIM CROW of Texas, unlike Jim Crow of New York, is not a hypocrite. New Yorkers generally like to feel that the Negro up north is not a victim of racial prejudices. On the surface this may appear to be true, since there is no segregation by color in public gathering places, theaters, subways, and trains. But the discrimination takes much subtler forms.

In Texas, the two separate worlds, one White and one Negro, are obvious at once. On the trains, on the street cars, on the busses, there is a section in the rear for the Negro. He would not dare sit anywhere else, even if he wanted to. In the movies, a corner of the peanut gallery is reserved for Negroes. The boys call it Nigger Heaven.

There is a Niggertown in every Texas community where enough Negroes reside to make a segregated district. In most East and Central Texas counties, where the majority of Texas' Negroes live, they far outnumber the Mexicans, and in some counties even the Whites. Some Texas counties boast that they are pure White. A Negro dare not let the sun set on him in some towns, just as the Indian of the earlier days was not permitted to sleep inside the city limits.

At first glance, Niggertown might suggest Harlem on a small scale, but two differences are immediately apparent. First, the overt recognition of segregation. The second difference between the Texas Negro and his brother in Harlem is

that the latter is pretty much an urbanized Negro, a city man.

The Texas Negro has his urban moments, too, most evident in a city like Houston, whose Niggertown is the prototype of all the Niggertowns that flank the communities in East and Central Texas—the Niggertowns across the tracks. Just as San Antonio is looked upon by Texas Mexicans as something of a “capital” for them, so Houston becomes a kind of mecca for the Texas Negro.

*Nigger and White Man  
Playin' Seven-up,  
Nigger win de money,  
Fraid to pick it up.*

When he lives in the city, the Negro is usually a street laborer, a railroad worker, a dock walloper, bellboy, boot-black, porter, janitor, or maybe yardman and chauffeur. Most of the time, however, he is still pretty much of a country boy, with country habits. The habit fixed for him more than any other is one of intimate association with the hardest labor in the kingdom of cotton. He is a picker, or he might be a sharecropper. He might drift to the city for odd jobs. Or he might have more or less regular work in the city and drift out to the fields during pickin' time.

As a country boy, he is very much like Jim Crow who lives in the Deep South. As a city dweller he resembles the Negro in Harlem. Usually he is a mixture of the two, so that somewhere in between the Negro of the Old South Plantation tradition and the Negro whose ancestors were freedmen in the North you can find the Texas Negro. And somewhere between the average Northern White's attitude toward the Negro and the average Deep Southern White's attitude, you can place that of the average Texan.

The average White Texan does not take Negro problems

seriously. He looks on the colored man as a childish, inferior being, and often gauges his reactions as he might those of a pet dog or horse or monkey. If the reactions are harmless, entertaining, amusing, the Negro is a Good Nigger. If there is a trace of asserting the dignity to which men of all races sometimes feel that they are entitled, that Negro runs the risk of being pigeonholed as a Bad Nigger. There are exceptions, of course. I know White people in Texas who have a very cosmopolitan, civilized and humane approach to the Negro. These people are exceptional, just as the Northern White who has genuinely cast off racial prejudice represents a relatively small group. Even other minority groups, who may suffer discrimination in more subtle ways, can nearly always find it easy to titter and snicker when the Negro is the principal actor.

*Ain't it hard, ain't it hard,  
Ain't it hard to be a nigger, nigger, nigger?  
Ain't it hard, ain't it hard,  
For you can't get your money when it's due.  
It makes no difference,  
How you make out your time,  
White man shore bring  
A nigger out behind.*

The Negro's love affairs, of course, provide a great deal of entertainment for readers of magazine and book fiction, in Texas as well as elsewhere. He is established as a comic figure, a kind of court jester by special appointment to the White Man.

Just as the Negro in his amorous experiences is always considered amusing, so the Negro having financial troubles is seen as terribly funny, the Negro politician is regarded as a clown, and the Negro preacher as a zany. The Texan only occasionally reveals a little of what Old Southerners like to

describe as "affection" for the Negro. He has rarely established a human relationship with the Negro comparable to that which residents of the Deep South recall. The harsher attitude toward the Negro in Texas seems to be akin to an adult's feeling to children—somebody else's children. He smiles at what they say and do. But there is always the White Man's confidence that he has the power to declare by ukase when the Negro is no longer funny.

This feeling is most apparent when the White Man openly seeks amusement. Then the Negro finds the most amiable inter-racial relationship, in his role of professional entertainer. His music seems to reach people of all races, to melt prejudice momentarily in a crucible of song.

*Oh, I got a bellyful o' whiskey,  
And a head full o' gin,  
The doc says it'll kill me,  
But he don't say whin.  
I love you, papa, deed I do dee,  
But you play 'way too strong.  
I sure had me lots o' bootie,  
And now the panic's on.*

The gal in the night club was going good, but still she was holding out. Come on, Daphne, the customer was holler-ing, give it to us straight, give us the real words, give 'em red hot!

*My old man's a railroad man,  
He works on Number Four,  
He's a rustling sonofabitch,  
And I'm his special whore!*

That a gall! That's the berries, get hot now, get sizzlin' hot, Daphne, give us the lowdown.

*Mah man Humpty had a hinge in his back;  
He never loosed a screw.  
On a slippery track, a wide-open crack,  
Jess broke his back in two.  
Oh lowdown, I'm feelin' lowdown,  
Hump leff me blue and lowdown.*

Daphne was over at our table now. Hefty, round arms, round legs, round head, round face, curves and turns everywhere, not an angle anywhere around the silver-shimmer dress singing in the spotlight, singing light, singing color, as Daphne was singing melody.

*Oh honey, honey, ah've got the notion,  
Come get me outa this commotion.*

Yowee! Wheel! Whoo! The swing band was off on a buggy joyride now, and from here on out it was a jam session, a red-hot jamboree, a jive and a jitter and a flat-foot floogie. Lookit those babies go! Lookit 'em turn! Lookit 'em shake and peck! Lookit 'em lift and swing! Yeah, man! You sure gotta hand it 'em when it comes to makin' music. Wow!

A newspaperman in the crowd had brought along a bulldog edition of the morning paper. A box on page one tells about death cells at Huntsville. A Negro named White, and a white man named Black, wait for the death walk that goes just one way. Black man White was convicted for criminal assault, the paper says. White man Black was convicted of murder—a young boy's body hurtled over a cliff and somebody was going to collect insurance on it.

*I will pawn you my watch,  
I will pawn you my chain,  
I will pawn you my diamon' ring.  
I will wash all your clothes,  
I will scrub all your floors,  
If that'll get mah baby outa jail.*

In Austin, the Governor, who believes in the Bible literally, including the place where it says thou shalt not kill, granted a thirty-day reprieve for a Negro who killed his White boss. To justify his action, which later drew sharp protests from constituents, he said he did it to make the condemned man suffer so much more:

*It seems to me that few forms of punishment could be more harsh than to see certain death, staring you in the face, day and night, for thirty days.*

The Governor is opposed to capital punishment, but in this case he said he did not believe that "any punishment could be too severe." He continued, "I, therefore, grant a thirty-day reprieve . . . in order that Winzell Williams may suffer this dreadful punishment thirty days before he is relieved by death in the electric chair. . . . I believe in the Bible literally. . . ."

*God made de Nigger,  
God made him in the night,  
Made him in a hurry,  
And forgot to make him white.*

Texas Negroes have one very special holiday. It is known as Juneteenth, the Nineteenth Day of June, commemorating the promulgation of emancipation when General Griffin landed at Galveston after the Civil War, in 1865, to become the state's first military commander during the Reconstruction. The decree set Negroes free, and a subsequent constitutional amendment forever abolished slavery, granting to all men equal rights, regardless of race, creed, or previous condition of servitude.

*Old Joe Clark is dead and gone,  
I hope he's gone to Hell.*

*He made me wear this ball and chain,  
He made my ankles swell.*

When the pine leaf turns yellow, or when you see a red-headed Indian, why then maybe you'll see a Negro cast a vote at a primary election in Texas, the Old-Timer will tell you. He'll be backed up by almost anybody in Texas in that statement.

"You see, we just about had our bellyful of nigger rule," he says.

Old-Timer is talking about the days after the Civil War, the era of Reconstruction, when Texas was run by Republicans, Carpetbaggers, and Scalawags. At one time, Houston's top city officials, except the mayor, were Negroes. That has not yet been forgotten, but after all it only happened seventy years ago. Nor have more recent incidents, in which Negro soldiers ran wild and shot up a town here and there. Brownsville and Houston remember such incidents most keenly.

The race question was acute even in the days of the Texas Republic. Mexico had abolished slavery while it still owned Texas, so a precedent had been established. Three categories of persons were listed on the law books—Free Citizens, Slaves, and Persons of Color. The last named could not testify in court except against one another. A person with as much as one-eighth of his blood classifiable as Negro was considered a Negro, although his skin may have been white.

A showdown on the question of Negro political rights took place in Fort Bend county, south of Houston. It resulted in establishment of the White Man's primary, which has become a Texas tradition. The climax came in the bloody political feud known as the Woodpecker and Jaybird War. The Republican Woodpeckers were ousted forcibly, and East Texas was made safe for the Democrat Jaybirds.

At that time, there were about three Negroes to every

White in Fort Bend county. When the Negroes were given the right to vote, the supremacy of the White was threatened. The latter were mostly "gentlemen" or executives, or employees at the bottom of the White scale, managers and office assistants and the like. Manual labor everywhere was strictly for Negroes. No White Man in those days would dream of soiling his hands on a shovel or a plow. "Working like a nigger" had a very literal meaning.

Most of the Negroes worked on cotton farms, on cane plantations, and in the sugar refineries. Today the Texas sugar industry, centered in that same Fort Bend county, is something of a private empire in itself, a perfect example of our latter-day industrial feudalism. The sugar town is a hard and fast company town. Everything in it belongs to the rulers of the imperial domain. Of course today there are federal laws, inspections, and improved machinery, so the picture may have changed a bit since the days when a favorite chant said:

*Black tar makes teeth so bright,  
Nigger sweat makes sugar white.*

As long as the emancipated Negro stuck to his "place," there was no serious complaint. When he became an officeholder under the Republican Woodpeckers during the Reconstruction period, when his appetite ranged away from 'possum and yams, toward T-bone steaks, then the Whites in Fort Bend county took things in hand.

The Jaybirds were organized to rout the Woodpeckers, who had been running things their own sweet way for years. One of the leading Woodpeckers killed a Jaybird leader. The latter's relatives decided to be avenged, giving the war a coloring of something more than a political or racial battle. Vengeance slaying, in the code of the hills, was looked upon as justifiable homicide in those days. The two opposing fac-

tions clustered around the feudists. In 1889, the Woodpeckers still had control. That year the Jaybirds marched on the Fort Bend county courthouse. A pitched battle followed, ending with forced abdication of the Republicans. All Negro officeholders were routed, and the White Man's Primary was established.

*Rabbit jumped the garden gate,  
Taint gonna rain no mo'  
Picked a pea and pulled his freight,  
Taint gonna rain no mo'.*

Preacher Paul walked the streets of Houston, wearing a square skull cap, from which a small silk American flag floated in the breeze. At a corner, on the edge of Niggertown, he stopped to conduct his services for passing pedestrians. His pulpit was a trash can. On it he laid his Bible and read:

*"Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.*

*"Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye . . ."*

It was in Washington, one might recall, that a hall was denied Marian Anderson, the Negro singer—not in Houston. In the Texas city, Houstonians jammed the old municipal auditorium for the Anderson recital. Also, Texas Negroes have their own newspapers in which they can do a certain amount of campaigning for their rights. And they have schools, although still inadequate.

Recently, San Antonio Negroes took court action, seeking the right to participate in the Democratic primary. Nomination in the Texas primary is usually tantamount to election.

Maybe a moral could be pointed in an old East Texas story about a Negro coachman, expert with the whip. He

could snap it and hit a horsefly, without touching the hide or leather on which the fly might be resting. One summer day, driving along, the coachman amused himself with the flies lighting on the horses. The massa got interested and wanted a more elaborate demonstration. As they approached a wasp nest on a tree at the side of the road, the massa suggested that the coachman try his skill on the wasps.

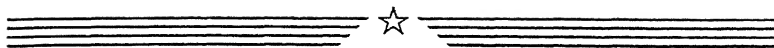
"Naw, suh, naw, suh!" was the quick answer. "Ah kin hit it all right, but naw, suh. You see, ef ah hit a fly, well, ah just done hit a fly, and then maybe anothah and anothah. But ef ah hits a wasp nest, ah just got me a peck o'trouble, 'cause the wasps—dey's done awghanize."

"GOT CLOSE TO THE PEOPLE..."



FRIEND OF THE PEOPLE





## VI

### CLOSE-UP THREE

TAKE a map of Texas. Draw a triangle that will connect Wichita Falls in far North Texas, Austin near the center, and Shreveport in Louisiana, just across the state line. Within its bounds you will find most of what might be called the Bible Belt of Texas.

You will also find most of the population of the state, more than half of the total farm production. Here, too, you will meet the most city-minded Texans, the most urban; as well as some of the most thoroughgoing hicks, the rural-minded par excellence.

The city of Fort Worth falls within these limits, fits the picture, too, in a general way. However, Fort Worth really belongs to the West. Its heart beats with the wind on the open range. Its brain thinks in terms of livestock.

With this single partial exception, the region described is dominated by the Dallas-Waco psychology. The three leading denominational schools are located in this area—Baylor (Baptist) in Waco; Texas Christian University in Fort Worth; Southern Methodist in Dallas. In these schools, most of the Texas ministers are trained. In this area most of the Texas crops are grown, most of Texas' votes are cast. Dallas—financial heart of the Southwest—pumps its credits and collections, in a systole-diastole of currency that makes the mare go and the wheels turn.

If you are being chased by Indians, wild Indians, Texas law gives you the right to use a pistol, if you happen to be carrying one, concealed or otherwise. It is a law that is on the books and has not been changed yet. Scores of similar statutes on the Texas books give a picture—in the weird terminology of the courts—of a Texas of not so very long ago. The law must have been inserted by some very cynical legislator, for in the lore of Texas nobody is chased by Indians. The latter are always routed, even if the Texan is armed only with a sling-shot.

North Texas, Dallas, Waco, and their sphere of influence, saw some of the last and the most bitter fights between the Red Man and the White. The earlier colonists to the south and the east had either made peace with the tribes or had driven them to the west and the north. When the first settlers about 1840 reached the Trinity River region—later to become Dallas and Collins counties—they not only had to fight Indians, but Indians who had long ago outgrown their bows and arrows. The Red Men who now faced the White were experienced in the paleface's habits and his manner of fighting. And they had adopted his weapons to their own flexible tactics.

The earliest Anglo-Saxon settlers—those in East Texas and the San Antonio region—had come to a foreign land, to a land held and dominated by a foreign government and foreign governors. The second wave of settlers, during the War of Texas Independence, or after formation of the Texas Republic, also technically came to a foreign land. But the men running things by that time, and the women making homes, were not foreign to them. They were their own kind; many of them had been former neighbors. They could move in with these people and feel perfectly at home. They had the advantage of getting a fresh start, and an even break under a system of manners and morals pretty much like what they

had been used to. The settlers who came to Houston, to a town already laid out in land maps, were typical of the second wave.

No landmaps were available for the early arrivals in North Texas, nor were they going to a foreign land. Texas had become a part of the United States, and its laws applied with all their privileges and burdens. The first arrivals had to do all their own building and their own fighting. Later the cavalry came to help. The new state of Texas was inviting colonists and offering them land, but little else with the land. The colonists who cut through the brush and timber knew they would have to build with the materials at hand, and with their own resources and energy.

Nothing was laid out and surveyed for John Neeley Bryan when he wound up his long trek from Tennessee, about 1840, and pitched camp on a hill that looked down over the Trinity River. There was plenty of timber, though, and water, and wild honey, plenty of quail and ducks, and prairie chickens, wild turkey, bear, buffalo and deer.

By 1845, exactly four families and two unattached bachelors populated the settlement destined to become the biggest city in Texas for a while. John Neeley Bryan was one of the bachelors. The business district consisted of two tents, one a general store, and the other a saloon. There was no, "What'll you have?" in that saloon, either. It was all whisky, and just one kind.

From Illinois, the Beeman family had come to encroach on the wilderness privacy of Bryan, the lone Tennessee settler who got to the present site of Dallas before anyone else. The Beeman family had been well out of provisions by the time the Trinity had been reached, but Bryan shared what he had—wild honey and bear meat, enough calories and vitamins for any pioneer.

Thus, Tennessee and Illinois converged at North Texas.

The later growth of the region followed pretty much the same general pattern. South and North both had a share in making Dallas.

*Straws in the Wind:*

*The first civil law suit*, soon after organization of Dallas county in 1846, was brought by one Charlotte Dalton, for divorce. A jury heard the case and granted the divorce. The same day the plaintiff married the foreman of the jury.

*The first bill of sale* recorded in Dallas county was one which transferred legal right, title and possession of one Negro woman, Jane, from Edward Welborn to John Young.

*Tennessee and Illinois were married.* John Neeley Bryan took Margaret Beeman for his bride, to have and to hold, in sickness and in health, until death do us part. He built a log cabin home where a skyscraper now rises.

François Marie Charles Fourier was a French philosopher and writer on social problems. He was born in 1772 and died in 1837. Fourier put forth a theory of human development which won him many followers in the Old Country and the New World. Fourier conceived what he described as "harmony among the passions" in a book entitled *Théorie des Quatre Mouvemens*. The acadamecians said his writing was uncouth and obscure, but a lot of other people understood when he spoke of the full and free development of human nature, the full and free development of human desire.

Fourier believed that these could be achieved through some other form of industrial organization than that he had experienced in the business world. He spoke of co-operative industry in which labor, talent and capital would work together and divide the fruits of their efforts. Labor would be allotted five-twelfths, capital four-twelfths and talent three-

twelfths. Society would be divided up into *Phalanges*. It was all considered very radical when Fourier explained his system in *Le Nouveau Monde Industriel*, a later book, which stirred up quite a row.

Many called it socialism and still do, but now it appears as something very much like the corporative state advanced by the theorists of the fascist countries. Fourier attacked socialists like Saint Simon and Owen. In the United States of Fourier's day, Albert Brisbane introduced the Frenchman's doctrine. Albert Brisbane was the father of the late Arthur Brisbane, who became a famous journalist on the Hearst newspapers. The elder Brisbane was a leader among the American thinkers who developed the Brook Farm movement.

After 1848, the soul of Europe was cramped more than ever, cramped like the land on which it tried to blossom and flourish. Men who dreamed of a great new free world found everything in Europe held fast by those who had come before. The holders said in effect: "We are the end and the goal, and henceforth there shall be no more light except the reflection from our own."

Victor Considerant knew Fourier and he knew about Texas. He formed a colonization company which was authorized to bring settlers from Europe to Texas. They came with Considerant—skilled artisans, scholars, artists, horticulturists, but not enough dirt farmers. They came from France, from Belgium, Switzerland and Germany, to found a co-operative colony. It was to be self-sustaining and co-operative, in the sense that no man should be permitted to live from the labor of another. They reached Galveston and, after finding that the first lands allotted them had been given to others, they planned to make a boat trip up the Trinity to Dallas. But the Trinity was dry, and that was the first sign of trouble ahead. They bought ox-wagons. For nearly a month, they plodded

across the wilderness until they came to their new lands, a short distance west of what is now the city of Dallas. They called their settlement *Reunion*.

Fourier, however, had never been to Texas, and he probably never conceived of such a place for trying out his theory. His teachings had nothing in them about rivers that dry up and stay that way. There was nothing in his doctrine about drought—a ten-year drought—and the blistering summers it produced. Nor about blizzards and the terrible winters that followed; nor about plagues of grasshoppers and the depredations of other insects and of rodents; nor about wild Indians, nor about land speculators, who swarmed into the state so that the price of headrights had gone way up and there were no more free grants. So, much of the capital that was to have gone for establishment of industries went instead to the land office.

The colony eventually dispersed and most of the colonists became early settlers of Dallas. They brewed the first beer in Dallas. They became the first commercial bakers in the city of Dallas.

### *Straws in the Wind:*

*Sam Houston was defeated* by his fellow Texans in the matter of retaining Indian reservations. Henceforth, the Texas policy became one of extermination, so that most of the Indians were driven out of the state. One reservation remains today.

*America for the Americans* became the slogan of the rising Know-Nothing party, opposed to foreign immigration. In a sense, this party was a spiritual precursor of the Ku Klux Klan.

*Sam Houston was hanged in effigy* by the Texans who had acclaimed him as a hero, and he was deposed as governor, because he opposed secession from the Union.

*Illinois dominated Dallas and Texas* after the Civil War, during the period known as the Reconstruction. Carpet-baggers and Scalawags and Republicans and Northerners ruled the Texas roost.

*Tennessee was on the defensive* in Dallas and in Texas. He was the vanquished, and he was drinking the bitter dregs of Civil War. Unionist Leagues were formed and so was the Ku Klux Klan.

Ten years of Hell, ten years of bloody strife after the Civil War, ten years of terrorism, and then the convention of 1875. Four native Texans were among the ninety-two delegates gathered to frame the new constitution. And there were four Negroes. Twenty-seven delegates were natives of Tennessee, nine of Alabama, eleven of Kentucky, five of North Carolina, seven of Georgia, five of Virginia, three of Mississippi, three of South Carolina, two of Missouri, two of Maryland, two of Prussia, two of Ireland, and one each of Germany, Connecticut, Louisiana, Indiana, Pennsylvania, Vermont and New York.

An era of relative peace began. The Texas railroads were being linked to those out of the state. Texas was again wide open for colonization, and the first place the new wave of colonists hit was Dallas. This time they came from many places in the United States.

With the colonists, with the land boom, came the speculators, the gamblers, the "sporting" world, vice and virtue, like Siamese twins. The Devil had his innings from the very beginning. He grew strong and powerful and arrogant. He spread his saloons and their trail of sin into the residential sections of Dallas. The good people lived in fear. And then the preacher of Christ rose as the new guide, to point the way out of the wilderness. Dallas needed plenty of preaching to—and she got it:

*Thou hast also built unto thee an eminent place,  
and hast made thee an high place in every street.  
Thou hast built thy high place  
at every head of the way,  
and hast made thy beauty to be abhorred,  
and hast opened thy feet  
to every one that passed by,  
and multiplied thy whoredoms.*

In July, 1881, President Garfield was shot. The Governor of Ohio asked all governors to proclaim a day of prayer for his recovery. None refused except the Governor of Texas. He replied:

"I do not deem it consistent with my position as governor to issue a proclamation directing religious services, when church and state are and ought to be kept separate in their functions."

The reformers had begun to take things over, to take over Dallas and the state. They sought their strength in the new movement known as Populism. It had risen from the common man's protest against monopolies and trusts, the octopi that were spreading their tentacles over the nation and all through the political cartoons of the day.

The ground had been plowed for reform. Texas was a radical state. Texas hated monopolies. Texas hated profiteers. As far back as 1873, the farmers had begun to organize; the agents of their organization rode the plow mules, rode horses, and harangued the farmers as they moved along the furrows. Then the early agrarian movement faded into Populism, into the Farmers' Alliance.

In 1878, the first Rochdale Co-operative was organized in Galveston. A few years later the Knights of Labor had gained enough strength to boycott the granite-cutting work on the state capitol building, completed in 1888. The building was being traded to the state by a Northern syndicate in return

for an immense slice of Panhandle land. The Granite-Cutters' National Union declared a boycott when the builders announced they were going to use convict labor on the job. Five hundred convicts were contracted. The syndicate paid them sixty-five cents a day. A nationwide boycott against the job was declared by the union.

*Stay away from Austin!*  
*The Texas State Capitol is a Scab Job!*

The boss of the job said:

"I shall hire any good mechanic whether he be a scab as you call it or not. I will not permit you or any society to dictate whom I shall employ."

He had to go to Scotland to get scab granite-cutters. He "smuggled" them in on the Atlantic coast and then overland to Texas, because all the Gulf ports were watched by the Knights of Labor.

*The Texas Capitol is a Scab Job!*  
*The Texas Capitol is a Scab Job!*  
*You cannot dictate whom I shall employ!*  
*Scab! Scab! Scab! Scab! Scab!*

In the meantime, the co-operative movement had been growing in Texas. It had established retail stores and even distributing centers, wholesale stores. The farmers were going for the movement in a big way, and so was the laborer in the city. They could not, however, buck two successive crop failures in 1883 and 1884, two crop failures—plus the railroads.

They might have whipped the crop failures. But the railroads hung it into them with a vim and a vigor and a vee-vovum. The railroads played ball with the wholesalers and the jobbers, the middlemen, and together they busted the co-

operative. The railroads had the ax—there was no regulation, and they could adjust their rates to favor whom they pleased. So the co-op stores went bankrupt. And the consumers' co-operative movement died in its early youth.

The railroads had opened Texas, and had brought settlers and started development, and nobody wished to deny them the credit. But it was not exactly philanthropy on their part. They had quite a spree of profit-taking, stock-watering, high rates. One railroad, for instance, was capitalized at thirty-five thousand dollars a mile, about three hundred per cent out of line.

Still they were not satisfied. They got their pound of flesh, but were demanding more and more. They were getting bigger and tougher, like the insurance companies, like the other trusts. They did not want Texas to develop her ports. They wanted to hang onto the transportation monopoly, and milk the state dry, cutting off their own noses to spite their faces.

But the people did not just sit back and take it. The country was in ferment. Populism was spreading on the waves of oratory that rose from silver tongues and golden throats. William Jennings Bryan toured the nation.

And Big Jim Hogg, James Stephen Hogg, toured Texas, running first for attorney general, and then for governor, on a Democratic party platform greatly influenced by Populist demands.

The Populists (The People's Party) had been active since 1877. More and more Democrats were breaking away from their party because it refused to heed the rising tide of popular discontent, whipped up by hard times. They joined the Populists, who grew stronger and stronger. The Populists were becoming a second major party, threatening the domination of the Democratic party that had been running Texas from the time the Republicans were ousted during the post-

Civil War Reconstruction. Since then, the Republican party has been an almost negligible factor in Texas politics. The People's Party never actually gained control of the state government, but a big part of its program was taken over by the Democratic party, especially from the time that Jim Hogg began to figure prominently.

Populism's greatest strength in Texas came from what has been described as the Bible Belt. The hicks were hopping mad, and their opponents called them "Calamity Howlers." Every time they heard Jerome Kearby, or Cyclone (Methodist Jim) Davis, or Stump Ashby, or any one of a dozen Populist spellbinders, they got madder and madder.

In the meantime, the Farmers' Alliance had been spreading like Johnson grass. It also opposed the crushing domination of the monopolies and the railroads, and the dropping land values. The fuel of farmers' resentment fed the fire of Populism in Texas.

The Populist and Farmers' Alliance election rallies over the state were no longer just rallies. They became camp-meetings, sometimes lasting two and three days, with eats and drinks, and floods of oratory. Preachers were taking part in the elections. Sermons were written with political orations as the text. It was a politico-spiritual revival in which the soul of Texas reveled.

Farmers came to the meetings with their whole families, in prairie schooners, and with camping equipment, from forty, from sixty, miles away, still with the smell of the soil and the smell of sweat. They knew what it was all about, too. One newspaper reporter wrote this description of a Farmers' Alliance meeting:

"To judge from private discussions, which were freely indulged in on the grounds, the majority of them are better posted on political economy and questions of national importance than the average citizen or businessman."

The hicks and the working stiffes were after the scalp of the skinflint, the wielder of power, the man of pomp, the baron of business, the plutocrat of finance. They sang songs with titles like "The Farmers are Coming," and this one, called "The Runaway Banker":

*Say, workers, have you seen the bosses  
With scared and pallid faces  
Going down the alley sometime today,  
To find their hiding places?  
They saw the people cast their ballot,  
And they knew their time had come,  
They spent their boodle to get elected,  
But were beaten by the people's men.  
The people laugh, ha, ha!  
The bosses, oh, how blue!  
It now must be the Jubilee,  
In the year of Ninety-two.*

And along came Democrat Jim Hogg and stole the Populist thunder. Jim Hogg got close to the people, and they began flocking back to the Democratic party. The former Populists' influence grew among the Democrats.

*Jim Hogg snapped his suspenders!  
Jim Hogg let his hair down!  
Jim Hogg let his shirt-tail hang out!*

From the Piney Hills of East Texas this bearded giant had come fighting. Like some reincarnation of a folk-hero, like the giant Strap Buckner, he had arisen, knocking down every man who stood against him, ready to fight the Devil if need be. As Strap Buckner had fought the black bull, Noche, so Jim Hogg would fight the monopolists.

Printer's devil, sharecropper, editor, lawyer, this six-foot three-hundred-pound Man of the People pounced into poli-

tics with all the force at his command. For a while he found himself in a briar patch with his shoes off, as he said. Before long the lobbyists and the trusts were hopping on him like a bunch of hens after a June bug. But he fought back with the fury of a Javelina. His speeches stirred the state. Jim Hogg roared out Populist thunder:

*Dirty flop-eared hounds!*  
*Hirelings of Special Privilege!*  
*The Railroads are making a truck patch of Texas!*  
*Wealth and Talent on one side, the People on*  
*the other!*  
*Stop the Monopolies!*  
*Regulate the Railroads!*  
*The People are mad, fighting mad!*

Jim Hogg put through a platform for the Democratic party that sounded almost like a Populist program:

*Create a Railroad Commission!*  
*Regulate stock issues!*  
*Cut interest rates!*  
*Bust the trusts!*

Some people called Jim Hogg a Communist. But he kept on snapping his suspenders. He tied into the railroads. He told the people that the railroads had already been given more than one-fifth of all the land area of the state in return for laying tracks. Texas had paid out of its public lands something like forty million acres, at the rate of more than ten thousand acres for each mile of railway.

The people rallied around Jim Hogg. In 1890, they elected him governor. He stuck to his guns and began carrying out his promises. He put through laws prohibiting issuance of fake stocks and bonds. Land frauds and grabs were nipped. Alien land ownership was abolished. But most im-

portant of all, Jim Hogg, in 1891, created the Railroad Commission.

Established originally to regulate railroad rates, the Texas Railroad Commission has become the outstanding example of state control of business in the United States. It is founded on strictly legal grounds, thoroughly tested and passed by the United States Supreme Court. Today the Railroad Commission regulates not only railroads, but motor bus and truck transportation, and all the outlets of the giant petroleum industry, oil and gas production, transportation in pipelines or otherwise, and marketing.

Blazing reminders of this control over the oil industry can be seen almost anywhere in Texas where production is in progress. Flares, shooting a stream of flame skyward, burn day and night at thousands of wells. In some fields, the flares are so numerous they light up the sky for miles around, like a magnificent pyrotechnic display. Passers-by wonder why all the gas is being burned, but any oil man can tell you that it is done in accordance with Section 7 of Article 1112b of the Texas Oil and Gas Conservation Laws. The section makes it unlawful to produce oil from a well unless escaping gas is burned in a flare.

So successful has been the social control exercised by the Railroad Commission, created on the basis of conservation of natural resources, that many Texans would like to see similar regulation extended to other natural resources and public utilities, such as telephones and electric light and power.

The railroads in 1891 did not accept regulation without a fight. They had a big lobby and smart lawyers, and were able to obtain suspension of the Railroad Commission for a while, before the issue was finally settled in the Supreme Court.

Jim Hogg's supporters rallied round him in his fight to put a bit in the mouth of the bucking railroad broncs. But

within the Democratic party a sharp division was arising over the party leader's interpretations of Democracy. His approach—that of the Commoner—was challenged by that of the believer in the "Cavalier" Democracy, best exemplified in Texas in the person of Joseph Weldon Bailey, whose star rose and fell later. Joe Bailey eventually became a United States senator, and then was dragged down, forced to resign. Joe Bailey had fought the trusts, too, the giant oil trust especially, but somewhere he got his wires crossed. Letters were brought out, correspondence showing that he had obtained a loan from a company that was trying to prove it did not belong to the Standard Oil trust.

Joe Bailey was opposed to kings, to aristocracies, he used to say, but he was also opposed to mobs. He carried his belief in the principle of self-government to the extent of opposing acquisition of colonies by the United States:

"I would haul down the flag in any land where the Constitution cannot follow it."

But Joe Bailey, too, was called a radical, and he answered that "it is not radical to abolish an ancient abuse." He described a believer in democracy as a real conservative, one who wants to preserve its best and not its worst features.

"It is the essence of conservatism to correct a wrong wherever we find it," Joe Bailey said, "because it is by correcting the wrongs which exist today that we can hope to prevent the greater wrongs which may be inflicted upon the country tomorrow."

The fight between Jim Hogg's Commoner Democrats and the Cavalier Democrats whose doctrine was later expounded by Joe Bailey, led to a split in the Texas Democratic party. The split occurred at the 1892 convention in Houston, when Governor Jim Hogg again sought the Democratic nomination—tantamount to election.

Jim Hogg's supporters came to the convention with a

flag on which the figure of a hog had been sewed. The slogan under it said:

*I'm no Jew—I like Hogg meat.*

They came from the forks of the creeks, out of the fields. Their cry was a hog-call:

*Oo—wahoo—oo!*

Clark opposed Hogg for the nomination. In his speech, which was the signal for bolting the "Hogg convention," Clark said:

"What is the situation of the party? The alien enemy has invaded the sacred temple and desecrated your gods. . . . I have taken the last step I shall ever take with the army of the Commune. . . . I here today and now turn my back on all Isms. . . .!"

Jim Hogg opened his convention with the answer:

"We are told that the Commune threatens us. But it is the legitimate child of the Cormorant!"

Jim Hogg snapped his suspenders. He opened his shirt collar. He stuck out his beard. He talked of cabbage and buttermilk, and turnip greens and potlicker, and sparrows and windmills. The Hogg delegates who had waited for his speech were described by a newspaper reporter:

"Their heavy frames and fingers are the kind that have been crooked by the plow handle, and they reveal the stern patient force of the American farmer. Few among them were dudes . . . you were struck by the somberness of his supporters. . . . Many had pocket knives busily at work whittling thin shavings from the benches . . . and you could hear the falling of tobacco saliva on the floor like the gentle patter of a summer rain . . . and their patience is like that they show in

repairing a broken plow point or handling a balky horse."

The reporter's newspaper headlined his story of the Hogg convention:

*Eve of Conflict!*  
*Unwashed Democracy Gathered at Houston*  
*for Pow-Wow!*  
*Greatest Hubbub of Perspiring Patriots*  
*Ever Assembled in Texas!*

Newspapers that backed Clark against Hogg printed slogans in big type all over their issues on election day:

*Turn Texas Loose—Vote for Clark.*  
*Restore Texas to Prosperity—Vote for Clark.*

A couple of days later they had to chronicle the election of Jim Hogg. In the same issue of the San Antonio *Express* which told of Hogg's re-election, was also the report on the election of Cleveland. The headline is a classic:

*Grover Back in Clover!*

Not until Farmer Jim Ferguson made the welkin ring again was there a campaign like that of '92. The preachers of Texas rose almost to a man in 1914 to fight Jim Ferguson. They reminded the people again that the influence of the preacher in the state has been something fearful and wonderful to behold. It is still potent.

For a while there were so many preachers, they were getting in one another's hair. The folks started making wise-cracks about the preachers.

One preacher said he had had a vision, and in the vision there appeared to him three letters of fire, a G, a P, and a C—G.P.C. That could mean only one thing to him, "Go Preach Christ." So he became a preacher. After listening to one of

his sermons, some of the congregation allowed as how he might have had a vision and had seen the flaming letters. But they didn't mean what he thought. What they really stood for was, "Go Pick Cotton!"

They began making up little stories about the different congregations, all in the spirit of good clean fun. For instance, they would ask you the difference between a Presbyterian and a Methodist and a Hardshell Baptist. And you gave up. Then the answer:

"A Presbyterian is mighty nice on the surface, but you can't always tell what's underneath the skin.

"A Methodist is like a bunch of squirrels flitting from tree to tree until they suddenly drop back or backslide.

"A Hardshell Baptist is like a 'possum. Chase a 'possum up a tree. He runs out on a limb and you try to get him down. You shake the tree and the 'possum drops one foot; shake again and he drops another, and so on, until he drops the last foot and starts to fall. But then he fools you by slapping his tail around the limb, and by gatlings, all Hell couldn't pry him loose."

The story was told of the farmer who was going to market for a couple of days. The day he left happened to be the one on which the circuit rider was due.

"What shall I do about entertaining him?" the farmer's wife dutifully asked her master. "You know you're the one always sits with the preacher and talks religion and politics, but I've got too many things to tend in the house."

"It's easy if you'll remember what I tell you," he answered. "If he's a Presbyterian, just put the Bible on the table, see that there is a good fire in the fireplace and leave him alone. If he's a Baptist, set a pitcher of water on the table, with the sugar bowl and the bottle of whisky. But if he's a Methodist, you send to fetch me right away. You're still too good-looking to be trusted with a Methodist preacher."

*My brother, do you want to be a laborer for the Lord?  
No, thanks, I'm working for the government.*

The revival has been an institution in Texas for a long time. Some of the revivalists give the folks straight Hellfire religion. Some of them go heavy on politics. But the most popular speaker has always been the one who could provide common-sense philosophy, not too deep, and in homely similes. Sam Jones was typical. Here are a few nuggets from his lectures:

"Home begets patriotism. Any man will fight for a home, but who would fight for a boarding house?"

"The wife who makes biscuits hard enough to knock a yearling down should not be surprised if her husband is driven to the saloon."

"Some people desire only to go to hog heaven, a place where there is plenty to eat and nothing to do."

"For years I used to go into the kitchen and kiss the cook, and my wife never complained about it. She was the cook."

The preacher of the frontier days really deserves a big statue somewhere in Texas. Not some particular preacher, a Methodist, or Baptist, or Presbyterian, or Catholic. Maybe they might call him the Unknown Preacher, for in most instances he has remained anonymous. He had a big job on his hands corralling the sinners, and he managed to get them through pretty well.

He started with a horse, and with a soul full of God, and most of the time very little else. He was sometimes a cowboy, maybe a blacksmith, or even a fisherman. His language was alive, as much a part of the life of his day as was the language of the Apostles in theirs. Sometimes he carried a gun, maybe a couple, and he could use them as well as the next man. If he traveled to the really tough towns, he had to be ready to whip double his weight in tough hombres.

About Brother L. R. Millican, one of those early preachers, Buren Sparks wrote in the *Baptist Standard*:

"His missionary hegira into the West was a strange contrast to that of those daring souls who preceded him. Coronado might go there in the search for the seven cities of Cibola, or the golden mirage of Quivira, but Millican's quest was one for eternal treasure—the souls of these western men.

"He soon won his way into the hearts of these hardy people. They liked his method of approach, for he always hit a town or a cow camp on the back of a nervous, high-stepping bronc. Cowboys just naturally liked a bronc-riding preacher. Millican could not only fork a bronc, but he could rope one that had never known leather, put a saddle on him and ride him to a fare-you-well. Plunges, sun-fishing, and stiff-legged jumps on the part of the bronc could not dislodge the hard-riding preacher.

"After one of these performances, the cowboys would give each other a wink and say, 'He's our kind, he'll do.' Then after a supper of frijoles, bacon and black coffee, it was no trouble to preach to a circle of cowboys as they squatted around the campfire. . . . He could not be stampeded by physical fear. Later on some of these same men learned that this preacher could take a gun and lead a posse on the trail of an outlaw, horse thieves and cattle rustlers. . . . During the period of his ministry he preached in some strange places and from some unique pulpits. Often times he conducted religious services in a saloon, despite the fact that he loathed the liquor traffic. . . ."

*If you'll listen a while, pards,  
I'll show you the Bible in cards.  
The ace that reminds us of one God,  
The deuce of the Father and Son,  
The trey of the Father and Son and Ghost,  
For you see all them Three are but one.*

Assailed by the preachers because he opposed the principle of Prohibition, Jim Ferguson in 1914 had the campaign of his life—and the most colorful and exciting one since the days of Jim Hogg. Farmer Jim was fully as good a campaigner as Jim Hogg, and he had the same turnip-green talk that so many less talented stump speakers try to ape.

“Drive the political preachers back to their pulpits,” Jim repeated over and over again. He made it plain that he was not against all preachers, but only those who were out campaigning instead of sticking to religion, as he thought they should.

Jim, in an early campaign speech, described himself modestly as the “degenerate son of a noble sire.” This unhappy choice of language, one of the very few times that Jim slipped up in this manner, did not daunt him. He repeated it and repeated it, with explanations, and since the audience listened to him, the war-cry against him was actually turned in his favor. Listen:

“I do not claim to be as good a man religiously as my old daddy, and I never expect to be. He was a pioneer Methodist preacher, and he gave his life as a living sacrifice that sinners might be saved. He lived and went about doing good in a day when men preached for the glory of God and not for the love of Gold. When a fellow comes to my house and prates about being better than his good old daddy in the good old pioneer days, I feel like going out and locking the corncrib and the chicken house till that fellow gets out of the neighborhood.”

His opponents said Jim was “a man with hayseed in his hair and a bankroll in his hand.” But the hicks were for him, and a contemporary newspaper says, of one of his meetings, “More than half of the audience were farmers, fresh from the fields, perspiring and dust-begrimed.” They came to listen, because one of Jim’s strong planks was on farm-tenantry, and

that was strong enough to win for him even in the dry counties. He said the farmers, the share-farmers and the renters, were being milked. Being a banker, he knew. He told them that one-third of the grain and one-fourth of the cotton crop was enough, instead of the fifty or sixty per cent they were then paying in many places for the use of the land. That was music to their ears. It drowned out everything his opponents said about Jim, even what they said about his wetness and his being a tool of the liquor interests.

"The unpurchasable Democratic yeomanry of Texas is going to scourge the political tricksters from the high places," he told them.

Then he turned loose on the preachers in typical Ferguson manner:

"I have nothing against the preachers, the good old kind who call sinners to repentance and preach the gospel out of love for it . . . but these preachers who forsake their sacred calling to foment strife and blacken men's characters are the ones I'm after. . . . They look just like thirty cents to me and deserve no more consideration and no more respect than other political preachers. . . ."

On picnic grounds, with dust inches thick, the thermometer registering 110 in the shade, Jim would pull off his coat and lash into his enemies, and when he was through he was limp as a rag hung on a clothesline, fresh from the wash-tub. His hearers wore overalls and hickory shirts, straw hats and red bandannas. They applauded the fast ones he put right over the plate at the "ecclesiastical hypocrites." Also the curves he threw into his opponent, "that poker-playing, whisky-drinking" candidate who belonged to a swank club where whisky was served—and on Sundays, and yet had the nerve to attack Jim for his stand on Prohibition.

His enemies jumped on Jim for his uncouth ways. He answered:

*The Lord is with me in the fight  
to wrest Texas from the misrule of the bosses!  
I may not make 45 in English grammar,  
I may not make 55 in History, but I'll make  
a grade of 75,000 majority in the election!*

His majority, in spite of his famous "vest-pocket vote," was not quite that big, but he was elected. And re-elected. In 1917, soon after he began his second term, Jim Ferguson was impeached on charges of misconduct and was ousted from office. That same year, his most consistent enemies, the anti-salooners, scored their great triumph, the establishment of nationwide Prohibition.

Eight years later, in 1923, Jim, no longer eligible, was elected governor by proxy, in the person of his wife, the famous "Ma" Ferguson, first woman governor of Texas. She ran on a platform opposing the Ku Klux Klan, then the most burning issue in Texas politics. Many of the "righteous" school of politicians had sided with the Klan. The "invisible government" had made inroads into the Democratic party and had penetrated high places of government. Between Ku Klux Klanism and "Fergusonism" the people of Texas chose the latter.

In 1933, Ma Ferguson was elected governor again. The spirit of the Old Populists, revived during the depth of the depression, helped sweep the Fergusons back into office. If there is such a thing as poetic justice in politics, the Fergusons must have gloried in it during Ma's second term—when the Prohibition amendment was repealed by Texas.

Texans who recall the stirring days of Jim Hogg and the era of Fergusonism must have been both amused and amazed at the newest political sensation—Lee (Pass-the-biscuits-Pappy) O'Daniel, elected governor of Texas in 1938. O'Daniel, a flour dealer before he ran for governor—his first political venture—was shrewd enough to dip into the Texas

vote-getting tradition of skimmed milk and potlicker and wild onions and cracklin' bread and fried jackrabbit and bear-grass preserves. Businessman O'Daniel, a successful salesman, acquired all the trappings to play this role of the man of the people. He had a so-called "hillbilly" band, and he made speeches in his shirtsleeves in empty lots and on courthouse steps. The "hillbilly" idea, plus good promotion plus advocacy of old-age pensions plus a slogan about "driving out the professional politicians" elected Pappy O'Daniel. He talked of revivals, quoted the Bible, sang songs about Texas, some of his own composition. A rather plain-looking man, with no special oratorical flair, he had the advantage of sound trucks and the radio. While his opponents talked abstract legislative jargon, shooting over the heads of the people, he was astute enough to aim at the heart.

After the 1938 election, I was walking through the rotunda of the state capitol where the portraits of all former governors are displayed. The frames, of uniform dimensions, color, and texture, have made all the ex-chief executives the same size, with no hint of their varying stature as human beings, as politicians, as orators, and as statesmen. As I thought of the recent campaign, I wondered what men like Jim Hogg and Jim Ferguson and Joe Bailey could have done with public-address systems and radios and sound movies at their disposal.



## VII

### CHIPPY

Corpus Christi is a vest-pocket edition of Houston, but with stronger Mexican influence. Corpus Christians pay homage every year to Colonel Kinney, a colorful character of the early frontier days. He was a smuggler, trader, fighter and, as things worked out, a patriot. The early day residents of Texas, it might be pointed out, attached no stigma to the business of smuggling, and the boundary lines were often so shifting that many honest traders unwittingly became smugglers.

Corpus Christi calls her celebration, perhaps fittingly enough, since she is a seaport, Buccaneer Days. The daddy of Corpus Christi was a Pennsylvania Irishman, who took to roaming the Spanish Main back in the eighteen-thirties, as solace for unrequited love. The story is that the spurner was none other than a daughter of Daniel Webster.

Colonel Kinney established his trading post on the Nueces River, and enjoyed a tremendous share of the wagon-train business that plied the coast, down to Mexico, and west to San Antonio. When General Zachary Taylor, in 1845, en route to the Mexican border, reached this section, one of his transports ran aground in the shallows of Corpus Christi Bay. An officer of his army, writing back home, described the population of that day as "smugglers and lawless persons," and the place they inhabited as "the most murderous, thiev-

ing, gambling, Godforsaken hole in the Lone Star State or out of it."

The effete Easterners never could understand the tough business of carving out new communities on the frontier. Some of the respectable descendants of these early, lusty, enterprising traders occasionally laugh about those things if they happen to be broad-minded. But, as in most places in Texas, they usually skip this period when tracing the family tree back to the *Mayflower*.

Corpus was having her oil and gas boom in 1937 and 1938 and 1939. Her brand new waterfront has grown by leaps and bounds. In a few short years the port has acquired all the salt tang of the Atlantic seaboard, the Gulf Coast and the Pacific combined.

In Chippy's waterfront joint, you could hear seamen telling of their adventures in New Orleans, Galveston, in Frisco, and San Diego. They matched nickels to see who would pay for playing the phonograph. Eight out of ten times the piece selected by the loser was a lively melody entitled, "Get That Monkey Off My Back."

The woman who owns and operates the waterfront beer parlor and dance hall—she is known only as Chippy—is descended, on her father's side, from a family which was among the early settlers of Texas. A beer joint is not exactly the place you would go ordinarily for historical data. Yet Chippy, surprisingly enough, remembers many details of the old family home in a large Texas city. And she still has a lot of letters and a couple of diaries that give a pretty good picture of certain phases of early Texas life not to be found in the usual run of memoirs.

Chippy looked and talked like any one of a thousand business or professional women you might run across in any city. She carried her forty-six years or so well, was what might be called youthfully mature. Her brown hair had lost none of

its luster. Maybe it was the hairwash she used, but it was a head of hair that seemed to belong to a younger woman.

There was nothing distinguished about her features: hazel eyes, straight nose, neither long nor unusually short; a face thinner than otherwise, inclined slightly to sharpness, but still a long way from being hatchet. She was a bit tall for a woman, but you would notice that only if you saw her with others. She might pass, in a crowd, on a train, aboard a boat, on a plane, as a department-store buyer, an office manager, a dress-shop owner, a high-class insurance woman. She seemed alert, self-possessed, with that peculiar air of people who are good managers, of themselves, and/or of others.

Chippy's mother, Goldie, had been a showgirl in the days when anything connected with the stage was regarded by the righteous as the province of the very Devil himself. Along with others of the night world, she had drifted down to Texas after the period of Reconstruction. Among the enterprising folks of the early days—many of whom came to Texas to get a new start after having been cast beyond the pale back home—was Chippy's mother.

Goldie married a man who made his living hunting buffalo for the hides. She took good care of his money, so he wouldn't fizz it away. They saved up enough so that when an opportunity arrived to buy a business—it happened to be a saloon—they were prepared. That was their start. Like some of the others, they were soon buying pieces of property here and there. Some were especially fortunate buys, because they later turned out to be sites for business houses.

By the time Chippy was born, the city had grown larger, older, and more respectable. That is, the night life had become incidental, an adjunct of the city, instead of one of its mainstays. Men who might have been gamblers over a card table or dice table a few years back were now playing in more legitimate games. The stakes were higher and the re-

ward was not only in cash, but in something known as social and civic position. Some who got their start in what they later considered—when others pursued it—as rather shady business, were now important figures in the commercial world. The city had grown respectable and most of the older citizens, regardless of previous condition of servitude, had done likewise. Goldie's husband died a year or two after Chippy was born.

When Goldie died, Chippy took over management of the properties. She lost most of them in the Depression. With what little cash she could salvage, she went to Corpus Christi at the beginning of the boom, and has been there since.

As we talked, we heard the boom of a drum in the street below, followed by a chorus of male and female voices, with guitar and castanet accompaniment, blaring into a vigorous marching song. The Salvation Army had pulled up on the curb, for another skirmish with the Devil. It sounded like old Satan was really in for a tough evening.

The electric phonograph now had used up its current supply of nickels. The dancing stopped and the couples went to their tables and to the bar. One of the women came over and whispered to Chippy.

She turned on the radio. It was a revival meeting being broadcast. The preacher's voice boomed out in quick rises and falls, sudden hushes, a growing hiss and then a tremendous crescendo. It had rhythm, and power, and it would command attention even if you didn't understand a word.

*Brother and Sister,  
If you have troubles,  
any troubles at all,  
Take them to Jesus.  
No matter how big or how small!  
Jesus will fix them, yeah,  
Hallelujah, Bless the Lord!*

*Jesus is the best fixer-upper  
you ever saw,  
Praise the Lord!*

When I left Chippy's place, the "Beer Barrel Polka" was going full blast. Outside, the street was spotlighted under the arc lamps. A woman, leader of a Salvation Army group, was preaching. The others, instruments hanging on limp arms, formed a semicircle around her, looking toward a hotel building across the street.

The woman preacher, however, faced Chippy's place. She wheeled around occasionally toward the empty sidewalk in front of the hotel, and looked upward at the shade-sealed windows. But most of the time, she faced the beer joint and waved her right arm in menacing gestures toward it. Eight or ten men, loafing in front, looked over toward her, more with amusement than with fear of the doom she predicted.

I saw a drunk—he looked like a rancher on a spree—in shirtsleeves and khaki pants, staggering along the curb across the street. He pulled up to an electric light pole, embraced it, bent forward sharply, all in slow motion. He made a horrible face, straining further forward and downward, a lone performer in the small circle of light, like a clown seen from the peanut gallery. Even slower than he had bent forward, he now drew upward a bit. He reached toward his back pocket, and at the same time looked down again, at the circular stain he had deposited in the gutter. He straightened up and pulled a handkerchief from his pocket, wiped his mouth, and then turned and walked back in the general direction of the beer tavern. Two lean dogs raced toward the pole.

The Corpus Christi post office has something which few others have—a writing room, where you can sit comfortably at a table and dash off a card or a letter. Very convenient, compared to the writing tables at which you stand in most

post offices. It is a small detail in the life of a city much more interested in deepwater ports and gas and oil and cotton and canals, and resort promotion. But it is a telling detail, something out of the ordinary. Sometimes absent-minded patrons write on the blotters instead of on the paper. I happened to pick up one of the blotters, and the following, punctuation and all, is a verbatim quotation:

*I want a boyfriend I want a boy friend I want a boy  
friend I want a boyfriend I want a boyfriend I want a  
boy-friend I want a boy*

Wherever there's a bit of a boom, the "little fellow" seems to have a chance. He does not immediately have to face the stiff competition of established and powerful concerns. Naturally, then, Corpus Christi became the scene of action for many men with a few hundred dollars or less of capital.

Many small enterprises line the town, especially in the newly developed areas around the waterfront, and along Leopard Street and Agnes Street on the hill. A number of them thrive. The shopkeeper dreams of great days ahead when he can be big enough to achieve the dignified classification of "merchant." Either that, or of the time when one of the chain stores might have to buy him out.

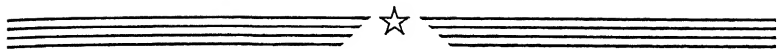
But, little or big, the old business spirit is there in this newest crop of Texas go-getters. In one hole-in-the-wall shop—a generous appraiser might give forty bucks for the stock and fixtures—hangs this touching little parody, embossed in golden letters on a purple background:

*Count that day lost,  
Whose downgoing sun  
Sees goods sold for less than cost,  
And Business done for Fun!*

“SHE PLAYED A LONE HAND...”







# VIII

## CLOSE-UP FOUR

WEST Texas is the eastern edge of the Southwest, Land of the Horse Opera. Here are the wide-open spaces, the endless stretches of plain, the metal-mountains, the gulches, arroyos, the cuts, ravines, passes, caves, the land of Broncho Bill and his spiritual heir, the Lone Ranger.

This is what the average American has in mind when he thinks of Texas. He does not think of bustling cities, of Houston and Dallas, nor of the piney woods, seaports, farmers pushing plows, grapefruit orchards. No. Those things seem to belong elsewhere. He pictures the great span of thinly populated land that fans out west of Fort Worth—toward Amarillo and the Panhandle northward; toward El Paso and New Mexico on the south and west. That represents Texas to him and he may be right. For, although there have been surface changes, new garments replacing the old buckskin of the buffalo hunters, underneath the blue or tan chambray of the everyday shirt, there still beats the heart of Old Texas. It is this spirit of the range—of the West Texas country—that makes him kin with Arizona and Nevada and Wyoming and Montana: all of the Golden West.

Aside from that, however, there is something else characteristic of West Texas—Bigness. Big men, big guns, big horses, big ranches, big cattle, and big, tall stories.

Texas is not only our biggest state, but also the Lone

Star State. It is a bit galling to some Texans to think that the state is just one star in a rectangular pattern of forty-eight, and this star no bigger than the others in the flag. How come? they ask. If you travel over the endless expanse of treeless flat country in the Panhandle, if you ride for hundreds of miles without passing so much as one village, one filling station, one farmhouse, without so much as seeing one human being, maybe you will agree, and also ask: How come?

If you take a long trip across West Texas, you begin to understand the sense of bigness that the Texan feels. You may understand, too, that his individualism is not something stubborn and contrary, broken from a bigger pattern. For the Texan of the range-land, everything must have individuality. Each tree has its own peculiar markings, maybe one with a limb bent thisaway and another with a trunk bent thataway, all full of meaning to him.

Each mountain peak, each pass, each jutting rock has its own special name, its own special existence in history and legend, that sets it off from the rest of the chain of mountains. He may not understand you, this Texan—because he cannot get the whole picture—when you talk about the Rockies, but if you say Saddleback Peak or Jackass Ridge or Robbers' Roost, he gets the drift. Out on the plains of the Panhandle, where trees are scarcer than hen's teeth, even each fence post comes to have a personality of its own. There are places where you can ride for miles past fence posts and never notice anything about one different from the next. But run along this horizontal infinity for a while and your eyes begin aching to see something vertical.

You begin to notice that one fence post is just a bit shorter. This post has a slightly different color from that of its neighboring wire-holder. One has a fork on it, another a knot; this has a bit of bark peeled off in a different place, that one leans to the north and another to the west. You know that if you

spent a great deal of time there, after a while each fence post would come to life, apart from all the others. And yet there they stand, all in a row, all almost exactly alike, held together by strands of barbed wire which they, in turn, sustain.

If one post fell, it would ruin the value of the whole fence, leave a big gap. Yet one post by itself could never be a fence. Your thoughts may begin to turn to philosophy and such, which is dangerous, and which can be very dull. But they can also turn to more interesting musings, and soon the stories begin to form. By that time maybe you have attained a glimpse of how necessary it becomes to people space and time with heroes and legends and myths and fables and songs.

All the things that happened to Pecos Bill and Jim Beckwourth and Strap Buckner, and many other heroes of the folk stories, no longer seem so far-fetched. It becomes the most natural thing in the world to run across Pecos Bill riding pickaback on a buffalo in a stampeding herd, or fighting his weight in wildcats, or spitting in a rattlesnake's eye and drowning it.

Pecos Bill was the toughest, orneriest, and wildest buckaroo who ever hit these parts, the kind of hombre who'd stand for no nonsense. If he was your friend, however, he'd go through Hell and Highwater and back again for you. He was mean and ornery, but he was the sort of folks you can lean on when you have to, and they don't give way.

Nobody is quite sure where Pecos Bill came from or about his pappy and his mammy. He landed in the Pecos country at the time of the Big Sandstorm. They say Pecos Bill's folks left him out in the desert when he was just a crawling brat. He was nursed by a wildcat and he ran with wildcats till he grew up and went off on his own. He used to hunt coyotes with his bare hands—grab them by the throat and tie into them. Pecos was so tough he used squares of sandpaper for

his bed sheets. When he needed fire, he'd get a spark by running his thumb across a piece of flint.

Folks who claim to know more about Pecos Bill than most others say he hit the desert when the big storm came out of the plains. He slid down a bolt of lightning, and landed right out in the cactus. The first thing you know there was a ring of rattlesnakes and horned toads around him. That was a tight spot, as you can well imagine. So Pecos, he takes a chaw off his plug of terbacky, and he spits the juice in the snakes' eyes. They all started crawling around everywhich-way, biting one another, till every one of the reptiles keeled over deadern a door nail.

So Pecos, he skinned 'em, and spliced 'em and made himself a lariat, the likes of which nobody ain't seen nowhere. He could rope a whole herd of buffalo with that lariat, and when it went through the air you could hear the rattles singing. After he had wiped out the snakes, Pecos Bill roped a wild pony and climbed aboard. First thing he knew he was in a big cloud of dust. He looked around and found himself right in the middle of a herd of stampeding buffaloes. When the clouds cleared up, Pecos was riding a buffalo instead of his pony, and that's the way he came to these parts when folks first made his acquaintance.

Pecos Bill ran a ranch for a while and it was the durndest place you ever saw. He invented a horse that would come right out all saddled, whenever Pecos thought about wanting to ride. They say he crossed a wild Wishbone Cayuse and a Brahma-Yogi Bull and that's the way he got his magic horse. He also invented a self-acting six-shooter. The gun loaded itself, fired itself, re-loaded, and kept on shooting till it was no longer necessary, and then it cleaned itself, and climbed back into the holster.

In the mountains of West Texas, up through the Davis chain and heading out El Paso way, not only space, but time

also, becomes boundless. Actually time and space begin to merge into timespace, one and the same thing. Clocks and calendars and mileposts cease to have any meaning at all, and finally they vanish altogether. One place is no longer so many miles from another, but so many hours. You measure a day by the work that you have done or you have not done. The rising and the setting of the sun do not mark off separate days any more. No Monday or Tuesday or Wednesday or Sunday, or any other of the seven names that we have given to so many risings and settings to make a week.

It is all just one day, and it has no beginning and no end. Every so often it gets dark, and then it gets light again. The change of seasons, yes, you can understand that. If you stay long enough, even those are no longer things apart, things that have meaning in themselves, like the blooming and fading of flowers, the greening and the browning of the leaves. They become merely bigger recurrent changes in the one long day, the one, long, everlasting day. And if there are no people around, you populate your mountains with ghosts and witches and monsters and other weird beings. Something happens, then, like the incident of the old abandoned well.

There is no water in the old abandoned well. It's as dry as dust, and yet if you drop a stone down it, and listen closely, you can hear the splash. It's not always the same size splash either. If you throw a little stone, you can hear it hit the water—plink! But if you throw a big rock down, you can hear it go—plunk!

Maybe you've never been around the old well before, and you take a good look at it one day. You see the cobwebs spanned clear across it. You see the rotting rope, the dried-out bucket, caked with dust, and not a sign of water anywhere around, and it hasn't rained in six months. So you say to yourself, well, that's that. Maybe, then, one dark night you're passing by and you hear sounds like a bucket being lowered,

the creaking of the windlass, and then the bucket being lifted and the sound of water spilling on the ground. Next morning, maybe you ask Old-Timer what the noise might have been or if you were dreaming. But he sits there, shoveling scrambled eggs into his mouth with the knife and takes a bite, a whole biscuit in one bite, and keeps on chewing. When enough's been swallowed, maybe he'll say to you in a casual tone, "Oh, yeah, that musta been Don Zeferino. He comes around every once in a while." He goes on eating, while you wonder whether he's batty, or you're slipping or what the hell is going on. Till you go over to the well. Danged if you don't see that the bucket is moist and that the cobwebs have been broken clean through. Then you grab Old-Timer and make him tell you about Don Zeferino.

Don Zeferino, Old-Timer will inform you, has been around these parts for a long time—since the first settlers came across the Rio Grande in the eighteenth century and established their big ranchos. One day, it seems, Don Zeferino was transferring a big shipment of gold from one of his mines. The party was held up by a band of desperadoes. Everybody was killed outright except Don Zeferino, who was badly wounded, and left for dead, while the bandits carried away the sacks of gold.

They rode to a house that used to stand right next to the old well, when it still had plenty of water in it. When they came to divide the gold, one sack was missing. It turned out later that the Indian servant had taken it secretly and had thrown it down the well.

Don Zeferino, in the meantime, got enough of his strength together to mount a horse. He headed for the house, and he was wantin' water more than anything else. He didn't know the bandits were there, but he knew about the well. When he arrived, they killed him and buried him on the spot. Then they left the country after shooting the Indian servant. The

bandits did not stop to get the one sack of gold out of the well, because when Don Zeferino showed up they thought others might soon follow, so they pulled out. Now Don Zeferino returns every once in a while.

"Some say," Old-Timer concluded, "he's after the bag of gold, and some say he's just come to get a drink of water that he'd been wantin' so badly when he was shot. We don't pay him no mind no more. We just don't bother him, and he don't bother us. But there's been a couple of fellows got killed going down the well lookin' for that bag of gold."

Many other desperadoes who ranged across the Texas stage now do their stuff in the movies. Their exploits are known to every kid in the Hell's Kitchens, and to every kid within commuting distance of the Main Street pitcher show. There were John Wesley Hardin, Sam Bass, Jesse James, of course, and Wild Bill Hickok and the Younger Boys, and Billy the Kid. And, not so well known, even a woman or two among the desperadoes, adding spice and variety to the fascinating game of holding up trains, shooting up towns, and fighting Johnny Laws.

Such a woman was Belle Starr, who ranged through Missouri and the Indian Territory, and Texas for a while. From Missouri, where she knew all the most notorious outlaws, the Youngers and the James, and the rest, Belle came to Texas. Her husband was Jim Reed, who also was wanted somewhere. A good friend of Belle's and Jim's found out he was wanted, and that there was a reward. So the very good friend caught Jim in a tight spot and shot him down. But there was nobody to identify Jim, except his wife. She was called, and declared that maybe the dead man was wanted somewhere, but she didn't know who he was, and he certainly wasn't Jim Reed. So the friend didn't even win the reward for his pains. He got out of town mighty quick, though, for he knew Belle would not wait too long to even the score.

Belle and Jim had been running a livery stable. She was well liked, especially since she was an accomplished piano player, and got her clothes from St. Louis. But among her friends were many outlaws, and she wasn't concerned about the stuffy conventions that most women regarded religiously. Before long, Belle had begun to lose caste and was being shunned as a loose woman.

Her charm and fascination, her power over men were the talk of the frontier. When the humdrum of the town got too dreary for her, Belle took to raiding, and was soon counted tops among the outlaws. She played a lone hand, usually, pouncing on a poker game somewhere to carry off all the money available, or riding into a town and shooting it up.

She also had her more subtle moments, such as the time she discarded her riding clothes and went into a town dressed in her best St. Louis store-bought clothes. She let the word out that she was a wealthy lady from the East, with a bit of change in the bank, and that she was looking for a good investment. It didn't take her long to get invited to the banker's home. He was doubly interested, since Belle's physical charms were as seductive as her reported bank account. She worked on the banker's wife first and completely captivated the lady. Then she turned her charms on the banker, but she did more than just captivate him. She actually captured him, abducted him, and collected a nice fat ransom.

Later Belle married Sam Starr, a half-breed who also was a man who did not get along too well with the Johnny Laws. He had staked a claim farther west, and she moved out there, got herself a new load of store clothes, and took her piano along. She would stay away for months at a time. Some folks said that she used to go to the fashionable resorts back east, to the watering places. There nobody could tell her from the finest lady in the land. Others said the federal government

was catching up with her, and that she used to go off every now and then to serve a term or two in a reform school for adults. There are conflicting stories about her death. The most likely version seems to be that she was shot at the head of a band robbing a bank.

Texas found that the best antidote for bandit poison was a hard-riding, no-talking, fast-shooting mixture that became famous as the Texas Ranger. The Texas Rangers did just about every kind of fighting there was to be done in the old days. They rode the border to check raids from across the Rio Grande, moved across the state to trail a band of marauding Indians, hit the road again in pursuit of bank or stage-coach robbers. They fought Indians and they fought Mexicans, and during several trying periods when the border was a keg of dynamite, every Mexican who crossed the border was regarded as a bandit or an outlaw.

With the Rangers riding on this side of the border, and Mexican riders on the other side, feuds of all kinds developed. Both Americans and Mexicans occasionally crossed the frontier to do what they felt ought to be done. Brutal acts were committed on both sides, and if you look at them in another light, some brave and daring acts, considering the chances taken. Much of the rancor of the early feuds still exists along parts of the border, especially where there has been relatively little settlement.

Fighting Mexicans was one thing, because of international complications. Fighting Indians was another, without any special complications except the possible loss of a scalp. Every once in a while, particularly in the Apache country, Americans and Mexicans joined forces to hunt the Indians. The Red Man had as little use for the Mexican as he had for the American. One remarkable Indian figure developed in the Apache fighting, one who will probably be an epic all to himself some day—Alexander, the Apache chief. He was an

heroic figure, over six feet tall, a genius in mountain fighting, and a wise ruler of his people.

But stories of Indian depredations, which have filled volumes of memoirs, are now giving way to humorous Indian stories.

A classic take-off is the story told by an old duffer to a goggle-eyed audience:

"So the Indians had us trapped there in the gully. They were all around us, shooting, and we were shooting back. But they had us surrounded and soon our ammunition ran out. We were in a terrible fix."

"Yes, yes, go on, and then what happened?"

"Well, sir, they just up and kilt us all."

Funny little stories are told of Indians who used to pick up the scrap iron at the United States Army blacksmith shops and then make them into arrowheads to shoot the soldiers. Stories of romance increase in number, romance between Whites and Reds. Whereas the older generation sought to hide any Indian blood it inherited—since a definite stigma attached to the half-breed—many of the younger folk proudly proclaim their Indian heritage. After all, were not their forefathers the first Americans?

The yarns of the savage deeds of the Indians—and of course they were savage, from all accounts—are being matched by stories of the White Man's brutality. The White Man—and these things are told by Rangers who were there—went so far as to shoot Indian women and children, just as Indians murdered white women and children.

What the future of the Indians will be in our writings is hard to say. The prediction may be ventured that before long he will have become one of our national heroic myths and will cease to be a slinking savage. Legends of glory and triumph will surely develop around him, as the new generations become less proud of the wholesale killing and routing

of the Red Man, and begin to claim distinction on the basis of being "part Indian." Perhaps it could be said that the Indian's future is behind him, but that he has a glorious past ahead of him.

Besides their regular run of duties, Rangers or ex-Rangers were occasionally called in to do odd jobs. One was to fight striking workers of an American mining company operating in a Mexican border town. In another place, an ex-peace officer was hired in 1886 to break the famous Cowboy Strike at Old Tascosa, a unique occurrence in the history of the West. The man organized a band which he called "Rangers" because of the prestige of the state constabulary. His became known as "Home Rangers." Among these Home Rangers were several notorious killers, whose method was elimination of the strikers via the powder-and-lead route.

The Cowboy Strike was part of the changing picture of the Panhandle when the giant ranches, like the XIT, moved into the territory. The old ranchers had permitted their cowboys to brand "sleepers," which are the unbranded yearlings, earmarked in the summer. It was understood that the boys could have this privilege, within reason. Thus they could augment their pay, and it would give them a chance of getting a start, building their own herds. When the giant cattle corporations, made up heavily of British capital, moved in, they abolished the unbusinesslike practice. Naturally this aroused resentment among the cowpunchers.

The cowboys struck, demanding higher wages and the right to brand a limited number of sleepers. The cowboys made camp on a near-by creek and had a pretty tough time of it, especially since they had no financial resources. They got a little help from some of the smaller ranchers, but soon the strikers were drifting into other work, bartending and the like. Several bitter gunfights took place between the strike-breaking Home Rangers and the striking cowboys.

Now, you might think that with an organization like the Texas Rangers to set the precedent in law enforcement, Texas today would have become a shining example of crime eradication. Somehow, no such thing has happened. Maybe it is because the state is so big, and there are so many stretches of land where the population is too scattered to make professional law enforcement feasible. In the sparsely settled regions, each rancher and each farmer is still his own law, by way of his skill with the shotgun, carbine or six-shooter.

Statistics on slayings in Texas indicate that guns are still carried in this state—and that not a few Texans are still “wild and woolly and full of fleas and never been curried below the knees.” The murder rate for Texas over a five-year period, from 1933 to 1937 inclusive, was eighteen per one hundred thousand population, three times that of the average for the entire country. These are figures compiled by the University of Texas Bureau of Municipal Research.

The same report shows further that the murder rate in Texas was nearly five times that of the New York City area, four times that of Chicago, ten times that of the New England area. Only one other area in the United States showed a higher murder rate than that of the Lone Star State.

It may be of interest to note, however, that of some 3,700 new prisoners committed to the various state institutions during 1938, only thirteen were cowboys. Laborers led all other classifications, with 796, while cooks were second with 372. There were, in addition, 223 farmers, 197 porters, 205 chauffeurs, 175 truck drivers, 118 clerks, 110 barbers, 80 carpenters, 73 painters, 70 housekeepers, 33 butchers, 21 musicians, four actors, four baseball players, one minister, and one lawyer.

In 1939, on express orders from the Governor, the Texas Rangers were engaged in a statewide drive against persons displaying punchboards.

The bull and his emasculated brother, the steer, reign in West Texas.

As they thrive, so does the country. The bull and steer are bread and butter for the folk of the range-land. They are even more important than the mustang, bronc or cayuse in this widely open-spaced Land of the Horse Opera.

It is not strange, then, that at a reunion of old cow-punchers, at a gathering of rangers, or old settlers, at a county dairy show, or at a barbecue outing for a convention, the topic that holds the floor longest is something connected with cattle. The bull—and this term is used to include also the ex-bull, known as a steer—is by far the greatest and the most important folk-hero of West Texas, or for that matter, of all Texas.

You are faced by the bull on the North Plains and the South Plains of Texas; the bull in the mountains, bull on the flat stretches of pasture land; bull in the east and bull in the west; bull in the city, and bull in the country; bull in the newspapers, bull on the radio, bull in street corner conversations; bull in the morning, bull in the afternoon, bull at night.

If it is true, as astrologers show for a fee, that all living things are governed by special signs of the zodiac, there will never be a question about which rules the destinies of the Texas range country. It is Taurus, unchallenged. If there is to be an escutcheon for that country, then there is no question about the symbol. Unanimously, the vote is for a bull, rampant in a field of redtop cane and hegari. Other sections of the state might have their symbols of cotton boll or oil derrick, pine tree, or steamer, or plow. But West Texas—even in parts of the Panhandle where wheat is more important economically—will stick to its bull, first, last, and always.

The West Texans will take part, with gusto, in the gentle art of throwing the bull, known to the old cowhand as bull-

dogging, and dignified into a paying-customer spectacle via the showmanship of rodeo managers. They will rope calves and ride broncs and go through all the rest of the performance which is an exciting part of the bull culture. The West Texan will buy the bull, ride the bull to his ranch in a trailer, feed the bull, raise the bull, throw the bull, sell the bull, butcher or breed the bull, as circumstances may dictate.

Cattle turned West Texas into immense ranches instead of little fenced-in areas of farmlands. The possibilities of making money from cattle-raising brought about such phenomena as the great XIT Ranch of the Panhandle. The XIT was established on three million acres of land which the state of Texas paid a Northern syndicate in return for building a new capitol in Austin. The original ranch stretched in a thirty-mile-wide strip for two hundred miles, from Lubbock in the South Plains of Texas, to the Oklahoma line.

The founding of the great ranch empires of Texas were as dependent on cattle as the establishment of the city of Carthage. You may recall how that city came into being when a group of Tyrian emigrants, led by the daughter of the King, Mutton I, purchased a piece of land. Instead of a formal measurement, the seller proposed that they would be given as much land as "could be contained by the skin of an ox." That looked like a bad bargain until the Tyrians began cutting the ox-hide into a thin strip. When spread out, it contained a good bit of land. And the Tyrians thanked their Bull-headed God.

Every year some of the pioneer cowpunchers and ranchers of the Panhandle gather in Dalhart for the annual XIT Reunion. There, the stories of the early days are told again by men who have long since passed their allotted three score years and ten. There again the story is heard of how Ab Blocker, back in 1885, first traced out the original XIT brand with his boot-heel in the dust.

Ab Blocker it was who delivered the first cattle to the new ranch. The newcomers did not have a brand. Ab figured out the XIT mark as one that could not be burned off by rustlers. There are other stories about the origin of the brand. Some say that the owners created it to stand for "Ten in Texas," for the reason that the ranch covered that many counties. But the most accepted version is that the brand originated with Ab Blocker and was approved by the manager, "Barbecue" Campbell, because it could be burned with a straight iron in five quick applications, and was hard to disguise.

The business of transforming one brand into another was, in fact, one of the principal diversions of rustlers in the pioneer days. It became a dangerous game when the reward for a caught rustler was a stretched neck. The resourcefulness and ingenuity of the range folk in this matter are something worthy of admiration. Besides the regular brand and the ear-markings, the ranchers took to making a number of secret marks, on the haunches, and elsewhere, which a rustler might overlook. If he did, and he was found out, it was just too bad for his neck.

Cattle rustling has not disappeared entirely from Texas, but it has taken different forms. Today's rustlers use trucks and trailers and other conveniences of mechanized civilization. There is always a revival of rustling when times get bad and when the price of beef goes up so much that a cargo of beef on the hoof is a young fortune. In 1938, cattlemen will tell you, there was more stealing of cattle in Texas than in any year since the days of Billy the Kid.

Of all the four-legged critters in the range history of the Southwest, none has played a more important part than the famous Longhorn. Texas has been distinguished for some time as the state which gave the world the celebrated Longhorn. The State University football team, baseball team, and

other sports performers, are known as Longhorns. Other big Texas universities have characteristic Texas animals, birds, and even reptiles, as symbols. Southern Methodist has the Mustang; Baylor, the Bear; Texas Christian University, the Horned Frog; Rice Institute, the Owl. But none can match in charm, in power, in story, in tradition, the symbol of the Texas University—the Longhorn.

The prodigiously-horned steer is famous not only for the length of his skull decorations. He was known also as the biggest steer in the country, with longest body, longest tail, longest legs, and longest ears. He was the steer with longest cruising range, greatest endurance, toughest hide, and, of course, toughest flesh.

The Longhorn was the original Texas Ranger. He roamed all over the Rio Grande country for years, wild, reproducing his own kind, and multiplying, while men were busy killing off one another for control of the land and of the cattle.

Strong, rough, tough men—and they had to be to beat the Longhorn—rode into the Longhorn country to round up wild herds and start them for market. Millions of hoofs stomped the trails—longest in the land—across the state, to the Middle West, the North, and the Far West.

Today, the Longhorn has practically vanished. He is in a few zoos, on a ranch preserve or two, and now and then turns up in a stockyard. His arrival there is so rare that he always makes the front page. Replaced by gentler, sleeker, beefier types of cattle, the Longhorn is mostly memory now, and as such becomes ever greater and greater.



# IX

## SADDLE IN THE SKY

MURDER in the clouds—

A slaying in an airplane made news for the nation in 1939. Larry Pletch, a young aviator, had gone aloft with a flying instructor and, while in the air over Ohio, shot the teacher to death. It was part of Pletch's weird scheme to take the plane and fly it to Mexico. He had to land, and, when he came down, he was captured. On a plea of guilty, he was sentenced to life imprisonment.

Texans who read the headlines recognized an old story, one which had already appeared in a popular true-mystery-detective-story magazine. It had happened six years before—that other true melodrama from which Pletch's plan seemed to have derived.

In San Benito, not far from the Rio Grande, the Texas airplane killing of 1933 had its setting. A slender bespectacled youth named Erin McCall lived there. Like many others, he liked airplanes, and was learning to fly. His instructor was Bill Williams, who took care of planes at the airport of Harlingen, a neighboring town.

Erin ran around with a group of restless young people, high-school boys and girls, apparently bored by life on the farm or in their rural community. Some of them had previously extended themselves in search of thrills.

Lehman Nelson, thirty-one years old, was a hard-working

mechanic, who had learned about airplanes in his teens, and who for ten years or more had been a commercial pilot and flying instructor. While establishing himself, Nelson had worked at other things, and in 1933 was operating a gasoline filling station in Harlingen. Stocky, muscular Nelson was used to hard work. Alongside of him, young Erin looked frail and weak. But Erin had a gun.

Erin got the pistol from one of his companions. After they had tried unsuccessfully to steal an airplane from its hangar, the youths decided on the weapon as a last resort. The thrill-seeker's scheme was to fly to Yucatan in a stolen plane. The lads had several meetings, and worked out their plans, even to signals from the air. When the coast was clear, when he alone would have the plane, Erin was to "gun" the ship three times and then loop.

Young Erin went into action. He called Bill Williams and told him he wanted to take up a ship for another flying lesson. Williams could not leave, so he called Nelson to go along. With the pistol hidden in his shirt, Erin climbed into the cockpit of the dual-control machine, and Nelson followed. The ship soared off the runway and out over the rows of grapefruit and orange trees near by. Nobody can say just exactly what took place in the air between Nelson, the flying instructor, and McCall, the thrill-seeking youth. But this is what the investigating officers believe happened:

After the plane had climbed to about fifteen hundred feet, Erin pulled out his .38-caliber pistol and told Nelson to keep his hands up and his face to the front. Instead of complying, Nelson spoke to Erin, and at the same time made a move to turn around. Frightened, Erin fired. The first shot was not fatal, and Nelson lunged toward the youth, trying to wrest the gun from him. The two struggled in the clouds while the ship roared along without anybody at the controls—strong, but wounded, Nelson, fighting frail and nervous

Erin. Erin's forefinger still clutched the trigger. He fired two more shots, and Nelson slumped over, fatally wounded, his blood spattering over the instrument board, splashing into Erin's face and on his clothes.

On the ground, meanwhile, men working in the fields, or in front of their houses, gazed upward at the plane, which was looping and banking, rolling, diving, spiraling. It looked as if it might come crashing down any minute. Then it was suddenly righted, climbed upward, leveled off, circled widely and then nosed downward toward an open space, the old race-track between Harlingen and San Benito.

Several men near by watched the plane shooting down at the racetrack. From what they had seen of its wild sweeps in the air, they expected a crash, and rushed toward the scene. But there was no crackup. The plane came down in a good landing, not perfect, but not bad for a lad who had only five hours solo flying to his credit.

Erin climbed out, and looked for a moment at the men moving swiftly toward the plane. He pulled out his pistol. Then he ran about thirty feet away, stopped, raised the pistol to his temple, and fired a bullet into his head, killing himself instantly. The thrill-flight was over, and two persons were dead.

Somehow it seemed fitting that if there had to be an airplane murder, it should happen in Texas first.

Homicide, historically, has often been a clue to understanding earlier cultures. Students of past epochs have been interested in how men killed, what weapons they used, and why and where, under what circumstances and through what motives. By way of criminology—the study of men when they most violently assert their wills over others—much has been learned of sociology, economics, and politics.

The air slaying may remind us, for instance, that Texas is

a favored place for development of aviation, and that it is the most natural thing in the world for a man to slide out of a sky-riding saddle, right into a sky-riding cockpit. The vast stretches of coastal plain, the huge areas of flat plateau, unbroken by mountains, the expanse of arid and semi-arid lands, where rain is almost unknown, all help to make Texas desirable for flying. The United States Army recognized this when it established its "West Point of the Air"—Randolph Field—in Texas. For training-flights—piloting, gliding, navigation—Texas is hard to beat.

Watch a cowboy trying to break a horse to leather. You may then think back to the thousands of cowboys and horses in the past who went through the same struggle—the man straining to keep the saddle on his mount, the horse bucking and rearing and wheeling to hurl rider and saddle off his back and toward the sky. The broncho-buster in the ballad of *The Strawberry Roan* told about it vividly:

*I steps up on him and raises the blinds,  
And I'm right in his middle to see him unwind.  
He bowed his old neck, and he sure left the ground;  
Ten circles we made before we came down.  
He's the worst buckin' bronc I've seen on the range,  
He can turn on a nickel and give you some change.  
He went up toward the east and came down toward  
the west,  
And to stay in his middle I'm doin' my best.  
Then he makes one more jump and heads up on high,  
Leavin' me sittin' on nothin' up in the sky.*

Who could long for a pair of wings more than the cowboy who hurtles through space off a pitching cayuse? Who better trained in the "feel" of the sky?

Thoughts of the man on a horse take us back to the earliest days of Texas, to the pioneer settlers, the days of a wild untamed country and wild untamed men: desperadoes, smug-

glers, rustlers, roamers, and rangers; trail-blazers and Indian fighters; filibusters, freebooters, and soldiers-of-fortune; days of unfelled forests, thickets teeming with wild animals, great, wild regions of mesquite and cactus where the Longhorn thrived. It becomes easier to see how much a horse meant to a man going places and getting things done. As the man born to the saddle finds it hard to understand how anybody ever got along without a horse, so the Texan will probably soon be wondering how he ever got along without a plane.

Texas today soars out of its frontier past with airplane speed. The mustang is bridled, the Longhorn has nearly vanished. Another type of cattle now populates the ranges—shorter, stockier, but producing more meat and milk. He does little ranging, rides around in a trailer. The Old-Timer who remembers the Longhorn is full of scorn for the cattle of today, the fat, healthy, shiny-hide bulls with fancy names such as Sunbeau Tarzan, or Bloomingdale King Bates VI, or Prince Boy Hopeful.

Many of the Old-Timers still get together every year for reunions like the one at old Doan's Crossing on the Red River, in Wilbarger county, at the North Texas border. Most Texas cattle passed northward over the crossing in pre-railway days. It has not changed much since the days when something like a quarter of a billion dollars' worth of cattle, including ten million head of Texas Longhorns, and millions of horses and mules were driven to out-of-state markets.

Stories of the old trail-driver days are re-told at these meetings. Adventures with wild Indians, the wild Texas weather, wild Texas outlaws, flow into stories of today's accomplishments—production of most pounds of milk, highest butterfat content, the raising of a yearling that took a blue ribbon at the State Fair. All the tang of the open range is here, the zest of animal life in the open—feeding, and fighting, and

mating—still a bit of the lusty talk of times when punching cattle really meant punching. But all this is fading away.

Today the ranch is becoming scientific, with milking-machines, and super-sanitary stalls, and experts on animal husbandry instead of cowhands. The game of raising cattle bids fair to develop into something as full of thrills and excitement as growing cabbage. Nobody can doubt that it is all for the better economically—production of bigger and finer herds, more milk, greater returns in every way for time and energy expended. The increased industrialization of Texas has brought with it also another development to complete the mechanization of cattle-raising, to raise it to the status of a mass-production industry—artificial insemination.

This test-tube method makes it possible for one bull to father many more calves than by natural breeding. Bull and cow can mate without ever seeing each other. Tremendously bigger herds can be developed in a relatively short time, and the cattle need not budge from their home pastures. Here, again, the airplane begins to play an important role. It is possible, cattle experts state, to keep spermatozoa alive long enough to permit their transfer by airplane. And any place in Texas, big as it is, can be reached from any other Texas point by plane in a few hours.

Giving wings to spermatozoa is one of the more spectacular uses for the twentieth-century Texan's mechanical horse-with-wings. The Texan is finding many other jobs for the airplane, in farming, in ranching, in the oil industry, in border police tasks, in conservation measures. And, of course, in the Texas business world, where private planes, as well as commercial air transport lines, have been known since they first became feasible. Such names as Stinson, Corrigan, Hughes, to mention only a few, are reminders of the consistent connection between the growth of aviation and the men of the Lone Star State. Many of the country's greatest flyers have at one time

or another flown as commercial pilots in Texas, or have taken training at an army airfield in Texas.

Besides the army, other branches of the federal government—as well as the state government—make regular use of airplanes. Along the Rio Grande, where rangers rode from hell to breakfast on horseback in the old days, you can see the planes of the United States Immigration Service Border Patrol. Violators of wildlife conservation laws getting away with murder—slaughter of game birds and animals out of season or in excessive numbers—were trapped with an amphibian plane operated by the State Game, Fish and Oyster Commission. An aerial photograph of seiners in the Laguna Madre was used as incontestable evidence of illegal fishing. A group of army officers who flew to remote and otherwise inaccessible hunting grounds, where they had been evading the game laws, were caught red-handed by the amphibian flying game warden.

The pink boll worm, destructive cotton parasite, is being hunted from the air by flyers working for the federal and state agricultural departments. One machine in use is an autogiro which can hover low over the ground and thus spot old cotton stalks in abandoned fields during stalk-destruction seasons. These are the hardest places to locate and hence among the commonest sources of boll-worm infestation.

Farmers hire fliers whose planes are equipped especially for dusting cotton and vegetable fields with parasite poisons, and to throw up smoke screens as protection against frost in orchards. In other parts of Texas, farmers have found it cheaper and more satisfactory to sow large fields of grain and grass by scattering seed from airplanes. Planting which formerly took days can thus be completed in a few hours.

Ranchers use planes to hunt coyotes and other animals and birds of prey, as well as for scouting over extensive ranges to see that herds are being watered and fed. Here, of course,

the planes do not supplant, but supplement, the tasks of the horse-riding cowhand.

In the petroleum industry, the plane is used not only for transportation of all kinds of equipment which may be needed in a hurry, but it has also become a kind of auxiliary doodle-bug. Aerial photography, for instance, plays an important part in contemporary oil exploration, and so the plane adds its bit toward making the discovery of new oil deposits something of an exact science.

The plane brings Texas within a few hours from the important centers of Mexico and Central America and South America.

While the airplane roars through the Texas sky, performing numerous and varied jobs, on one mission or another, the Texas cowboy still can be heard chanting bits of *The Old Chisholm Trail*:

*Goin' back to town to draw my money,  
Goin' back home to see my honey,  
With my seat in the saddle,  
And my saddle in the sky,  
I'll quit punching cows in the sweet bye-and-bye  
Coma ti yi youpy, youpy ya, youpy ya,  
Coma ti yi youpy, youpy ya.*

But he sings to the accompaniment of an airplane motor whose hum mingles with the neigh of the cowpony. The plane, winged horsepower, edges out the horse—the living flesh-and-blood horse—in many fields of endeavor, more swiftly in some, slower in others.

On his mechanical wings, the Texan rides higher and higher. That same confidence and boldness which made him a rip-snortin'-who-the-hell-cares-sonofagun, which has made the Texan feel he could, singlehanded, whip any dozen Yankees, two dozen furriners, and twice his weight in wild-cats, makes him at home in a cockpit.

The Texan's eyes—keyed to vast distances in his 266,000-square-mile state—look down proudly at the sprawling empire which leads the nation in oil, in cotton, in livestock, in sulphur. His seat was solidly in the saddle, he recalls, through trying days when Texas was a part of Mexico, when it became an independent republic, and when it joined the Union as the biggest state of all.

And, he feels, his seat is still planted firmly in the saddle, although the saddle may now be a cockpit. In such a saddle, soaring high in the sky, guiding a horse with wings, his rein-fingers clutching a joystick, the Texan rides the skytrails with the gusto of the cattle-drivers of the land-trails.

The old trail drivers used to sing, "Ki-yi-yippee-yippee-ya." The Texan still can enjoy a yippee-yippee-ya, but there is sweeter music in the chanting rhythm of the plane dispatcher's radio-voice:

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